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in Education, United States of America







Idealist or Iconoclast:

Ernest Seeman at Duke University, 1925-1934

This thesis is dedicated to my parents,

Mary Marshall Lawrence Singleton

and

Louis Napoleon Singleton

who taught me to love books and learning

and

whose sacrifice enabled me to attend

Susan Singleton Rose

This thesis is submitted  
May 2, 1987, as the final requirement  
for the degree of Master of Arts  
in Liberal Studies, Duke University





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This thesis is dedicated to my parents,

Mary Southall Lawrence Singleton

and

Louis Thompson Singleton

who taught me to love books and learning

and

whose sacrifices enabled me to attend

Duke University, 1931-1935





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## Abstract

Why did Duke University fire Ernest Seeman in 1934 after his nine years as manager of the Duke Press? That is the question this thesis addresses. After studying masses of unprocessed papers belonging to Seeman, reading hundreds of articles, newspaper clippings and letters to and about him and about the period he was at Duke, and examining records that describe his life after he left, I still have no conclusive answer to the question.

Hints, intimations and suggestions underlie the story of the conflict between the philosophy of a highly intelligent, liberal, free-thinking, independent idealist and the philosophy of a university administration that imposed narrow, traditional concepts on the social and intellectual life of students and faculty. A detailed description of Seeman's background and personality gives insight into his behavior. An analysis of that turbulent era in Duke University history exhibits gigantic administrative and academic problems faced by the university as it emerged from Trinity College into a greater academic institution. Seeman, critic and iconoclast, was only an additional thorn to an administration so supersensitive to criticism and so lacking in confidence that it could not tolerate ideas transcending its own traditional, provincial concepts.

Seeman's problems with the university were enhanced by the fact that, despite his intellectual ability, his natural





curiosity, his love of reading, and his intense interest in the behavior of human beings, he had only a small amount of formal education. He seemed to be unaware that this situation made his position untenable in dealing with professors. So, from the beginning, when he began to propose progressive ideas and plans for the press, he was met with stone-walling, if not actual rejection by the administration and academicians. But his dissatisfaction with this condition was compatible with that of the rebellion of others within the university, both students and faculty, who resented the narrow rules and restrictions placed upon them.

Little evidence exists that Seeman pursued his philosophy of freedom for students and faculty beyond the confines approved by the university. The appearance in November 1933 of a derogatory allegory, "The Vision of King Paucus," depicting administration officials as stupid and ridiculous, precipitated a crisis on campus. Seeman was accused of writing or helping to write it, an accusation he denied. In February 1934 amid growing unrest among the students, Seeman was again accused by university officials of contributing to the "Student Rebellion." A newspaper account of the episode called him "hostile to the administration;" again he denied any participation.

There is little proof that Seeman was directly involved in any activity that would justify his dismissal from Duke. This was true despite obvious efforts of university officials to uncover such activity. There is no doubt, however, that he had



knowledge of, and likely did participate in, activities that were not conducive to the betterment of the university. The administration did not seem able to identify any of Seeman's actions that were disloyal to the university; nevertheless, their suspicions remained unallayed. He was one thorn that they chose not to endure.

In July 1933, even before the allegory and "Student Rebellion," Seeman was advised that, because of the economic situation at Duke, his position at the Press would be eliminated. This, to say the least, is an unsatisfactory final answer to the question posed for this thesis.

Susan Singleton Rose





## Acknowledgments

The research and writing of this thesis has been a project of pleasure and sadness--pleasure because it brought memories of the happy times of my college days, and sadness because I learned of the turmoil and anguish that surrounded events I knew about, even participated in, without realizing their full significance at the time. My study of these events resulted in a new respect for William Preston Few, who described himself as "a man of the mind and the spirit," and Ernest Seeman, who called himself "a dreamer." I admire the dedication both gave to the conflicting methods they advocated for the intellectual and spiritual growth of the students of Duke University during a time of monumental expansion. The interpretations of the material relevant to their problems, set in a time of political and economic turbulence, are my own; I hope they lend understanding to the differing courses Seeman and Few favored for fulfilling the individual potential of each Duke student.

I am indebted to Mimi Conway for bringing to public attention American Gold and the Seeman Collection of papers and manuscripts. Without the impetus of the novel and the rich material furnished by the collection, Seeman probably would have remained a pleasant but vague memory of my college days. Similarly, I am grateful to Janet Earl Miller for acknowledging the authorship of "The Vision of King Paucus," thus answering a





question--"Who wrote this?"--that I asked in October 1933 when I typed the piece.

The project allowed me to renew old acquaintances and make new friends, many of whom furnished snippets of information that led down fruitful paths. Clarence Gohdes, James B. Duke Professor Emeritus of American Literature, made a unique contribution because he was not only on the faculty during the period I studied, 1925-1934, but also learned to know Seeman when Duke University Press began publishing American Literature in 1929. He described to me the university and Seeman in ways that could be done only by a person closely associated with both. I have greatly benefited from pleasant and informative conversations with him.

The staff of the Southern Collection of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, which contains the Conway tapes and the Seeman Collection, was helpful during the many weeks I examined the 15 boxes of unprocessed scraps of paper, clippings and manuscript, amid pine needles, oak leaves, peanut shells and dust, all rescued from Seeman's home at Tumblin' Creek, Tennessee. The staff of the University Archives, Duke University, was equally helpful in suggesting sources other than the obvious ones. I was fortunate to have as advisers Lawrence C. Goodwyn, who directed me in the research and writing techniques of oral history, and Robert F. Durden, whose knowledge of the history of Duke University pointed me to rich resource material. I appreciate the help from all of them.



I am grateful above all to my family for their support and their editorial suggestions--my sister, Mary Clyde Singleton, my daughter, Emily Rose Warner, and my son-in-law, Seth L. Warner. Clarence Gohdes told me I would find neither a "smoking gun" nor an answer to my question of why Duke University fired Ernest Seeman. He spoke the truth, but the search has been enjoyable and revealing.

SSR

Gray Rocks, Orange County

Chapel Hill, N.C.

May 2, 1987





## Introduction

In a photograph in an album now in the Duke University Archives, I am pictured among hikers in an Explorers' Club group on a trip to Mount Mitchell, North Carolina, October 28-30, 1932.<sup>1</sup> I remember nothing of an invitation to join the group, or any other detail, only that Ernest Seeman, who had founded the club after he became associated with the Duke Press, wanted to be sure that the campfire at the end of the hikes was surrounded by good singers. Singing was my entrée into Explorers' Club, and I enjoyed all the activities and associations of the group--the forays into the beautiful countryside of Durham and Orange counties, the companionship of students, faculty, staff, visitors to the campus, and the stories and singing around the campfires. Seeman had started the hiking group to "bring [together] teachers and the taught in a natural and informal way (something that in that day 'just wasn't done at Duke')." <sup>2</sup>

I had entered Duke the previous fall, very young and naive, thrust into a university which my father (Trinity College '06) wanted me to attend, despite its possible inappropriateness for a fifteen-year-old with eleven years' mediocre schooling. Ernest Seeman and his role in my early Duke days are still vivid to me. I recall him as an avuncular, soft-spoken, southern gentleman, attentive father and husband, and lover of all things in nature. I enjoyed his teasing contention that I, as a Methodist





preacher's daughter, must have learned my ABCs off the gravestones in a churchyard cemetery.

In the fall of 1933, with no knowledge of any connection with Seeman, I typed for Janet Earl, a classmate, a brief allegorical play, "The Vision of King Paucus."<sup>3</sup> Even in my naiveté, the derogatory way in which Duke's officials were portrayed horrified me. William Preston Few, president of the university, became King Paucus; Dr. William Hane Wannamaker, vice-president in the Educational Division and dean of the university, emerged as Wanna-Be King; Dr. Robert Lee Flowers, vice-president in the Business Division, secretary and treasurer, was Prince Struttabout Blossoms. Though at the time I suspected that Seeman had something to do with the play, I neither asked nor was told its authorship. Later I forgot that I had typed that manuscript. My older sister remembers that far into our adulthood I told her, but we can construct no date for the confession. I have no recollection of any conversation or incidents relating to Seeman's leaving Duke on October 15, 1934.

When the Eno River, the site of many Explorers' hikes, was threatened in the late 1960s by residential and commercial development along its bank, and by the city of Durham which planned twenty-six crossings of sewer lines between its city limits and Hillsborough, I remembered Seeman again. No longer would the Eno be the "wild and free-flowing river" Explorers such as I had hiked and recalled pleasantly from the 1930s. I mentioned to Exie Duncan of the staff of the Duke Press, that



Ernest Seeman would be saddened to see the beauty of the area so destroyed. She gave me his address in Erwin, Tennessee, suggesting that I write to him and send newspaper clippings that told of the plans for the endangered areas. He answered immediately, enclosing with his letter a copy of The Tennessee Conservationist which included a story of his life and activities since the move to Tumblin' Creek, Tennessee, in the early 1940s.<sup>4</sup> Our correspondence was short-lived; I had little to say to him beyond news of our mutual interest in, and concern for, the Eno.<sup>5</sup>

The publication of Seeman's largely autobiographical novel, American Gold, in 1978, again brought him to my mind.<sup>6</sup> While preparing a review of the book for my book club, I learned much about the author from publicity accompanying the publication of his work--his life after he left Duke, his wanderings to New York where he met Elizabeth Brickel Klinger, and their marriage after each had been divorced. They lived in Chicago, had a six-months' stay in Mexico, and finally settled at Tumblin' Creek. In the Archives at Duke University, I read articles and correspondence, the writing of which occupied him in that wilderness, and I learned of his absorption in his novel, then known as Tobacco Town. I also found out that, after a long period of deteriorating health, he had died on October 19, 1979, age ninety-one, and had been buried among the dogwood trees above Tumblin' Creek.

Research into Seeman's life revealed contradictory statements, indications of blatant prejudice, even hate for those





who did not share his views. These discoveries contrasted with the pleasant, social person I had known in the 1930s, and with the sensitive, loving, even romantic, husband Elizabeth described. Official letters and newspapers of 1933-34 that described his activities during his final year at Duke, and the novel, a roman à clef, revealed aspects of his character and events not evident to a young naive college student. My reading of his writings, after he left Duke, uncovered a picture of an egotistical, self-centered man with a hostility to corporations, unfair labor practices, and a derisive attitude toward all "skin-flint, money-loving" upper-middle-class values, such as those held by his first wife's family.<sup>7</sup>

This study, "Idealist or Iconoclast," represents an effort to discover the actual circumstances under which Ernest Seeman was dismissed from Duke. Was it the result of a fledgling university's simply being too vulnerable to tolerate criticism or satire? During the time of growth beginning in the 1920s, from a provincial college to a nationally known university, Duke may not have been highly regarded academically, but few persons in university circles were unaware of its academic burgeoning. In 1924, on the condition that it become the core of Duke University, Trinity College in Durham, North Carolina, had been made the recipient of 32% of the annual income from a bequest of \$40,000,000 made by James Buchanan Duke to the Duke Endowment.<sup>8</sup> Under the new name, it was building Tudor-Gothic buildings, buying library books from all over the world, and hiring faculty



members from prestigious universities. Was Ernest Seeman's hostility too much for a university administration preoccupied with larger problems? Was he dismissed because of his continuing criticism of the conservative administration of Trinity College now projected onto Duke University? Was there one single incident that precipitated his discharge? Or was he inherently a misfit as a director of a small but ambitious university press? Prospects were dim that I would find a "smoking gun." I only hoped to find evidence that would answer my question: why did Duke University fire Ernest Seeman? He had told his account of the event.<sup>9</sup> I hoped to construct a fuller story.





## I. "Square Peg"

Ernest Seeman was born on Jackson Street in Durham, North Carolina, on November 13, 1887, the oldest of three sons of Betty Albright Seeman and Henry Ernest Seeman. He lived nearly all of his first forty-seven years in Durham. That village, brought to prominence when Yankee soldiers returned home in 1865 with tales of bright-leaf tobacco made into cigarettes, was bursting with growth. Its citizens were recovering from the Civil War as well as constructing the tobacco factories and textile mills that would transform Durham from a sleepy village into a bustling town. Ernest Seeman's attachment to the town and the surrounding countryside never changed; all his life he had a love affair with his birthplace, to which his father, a hard-working, civic-minded printer-publisher greatly contributed. Henry Seeman, a Canadian by birth, came to Greensboro, North Carolina, with his family shortly after 1880 to work as an apprentice in the office of North State, a newspaper. After a short time, the family moved to Durham and Henry secured a position in the post office. But he liked printing and, in the rear of the post office he installed a small press, on which he did job printing at odd hours. Soon he opened a printing establishment known as Seeman's Steam Printery.

Henry, however, was never satisfied with routine commercial printing. He had two visions: to shape public opinion on industrial and educational matters and to become a publisher. In 1887 he helped establish The School Teacher. Other members of the stock company formed for that venture were the president of



Trinity College, John Franklin Crowell, Julian S. Carr, Benjamin N. Duke, and James H. Southgate, all prominent and influential citizens of Durham. The journal lasted until 1895 when it was suspended. Seeman leased the property of the company which he then purchased in 1898. In October 1889 he started The North State Artisan, a monthly journal. It was:

devoted to the manufacturing, mining and agricultural interests of the South. . . . Our main object will be to encourage immigration and to influence capital and labor to come among us and to establish themselves among our people, to aid in promoting every manufacturing enterprise that will prove a benefit to themselves, to our people and to the South.<sup>1</sup>

The journal was short lived. In 1906 he began publishing the North Carolina Journal of Education. Eugene C. Brooks, then superintendent of schools in Goldsboro, soon to become professor of education at Trinity College, was editor, and Seeman was financial manager. This arrangement continued until 1909 when the publication was moved to Raleigh. Thus Seeman's dream of a successful education journal for North Carolina had been realized. In 1908 he built a well-equipped and larger printing plant on Corcoran Street and it was possible for him to realize his other dream--that of becoming a publisher.

In 1902, Professor John Spencer Bassett of the Department of History of Trinity College had been instrumental in founding a literary magazine. The South Atlantic Quarterly's purpose,





according to Bassett, was to voice the social, literary and historical criticism of the post-reconstruction generation. This periodical--still in existence--emphasized the opinion that urban areas were "preeminently the product of the newer rather than the older forces in southern life. Somehow Durham has always stood for liberty to think and for freedom of speech."<sup>2</sup>

Seeman's company profited from the large amount of commercial business generated by the tobacco companies, and the excellent press work done by the Seeman Printery for the literary magazine and other divisions of Trinity College and the University of North Carolina made it something more than a local publishing firm.<sup>3</sup> Seeman was interested in the techniques of his trade, organized a credit bureau, and perfected a system of cost accounting generally in use at the time among North Carolina publishers. He was also interested in the cultural life of Durham, its traditions, its point of view, the men who made it; he suggested the writing of a history that resulted in Professor William Kenneth Boyd's work, The Story of Durham, City of the New South, a book which Boyd dedicated to Seeman.

This printer-publisher had great sympathy for black people. In 1898 when John Merrick, Dr. Aaron McDuffie Moore and Charles Clinton Spaulding had organized the North Carolina Mutual Life Insurance Company, Seeman helped to design, and then furnished for many years, the printed forms necessary for what was to become one of the largest Negro-owned businesses in the world.<sup>4</sup> Further, he sold to them land he owned on Parrish Street, one



block from Main Street, prime real estate in what was then a white business section, and at the price he had paid for it.<sup>5</sup>

At Christmas 1916, a few months before his death, Henry's employees presented him with a miniature composing stick of gold with these words:

To Henry Seeman, Master Printer

This is a reminder of the esteem in which we hold you,  
and to let you know that we will stick to you to the  
last period on the end of the last line.

The Boys<sup>6</sup>

This lengthy description of Ernest Seeman's father indicates the kind of person he was--very able, fair, knowledgeable about the printing business, intellectual, sensitive, aware of culture and refinement and appreciative of the opportunities in the little growing town of Durham. It is clear that young Ernest Seeman grew up in an environment more favorable than that available to many Southern boys in the post-Civil War age, especially those in rural areas.

Ernest obviously inherited many of his father's qualities, but he neither recognized nor appreciated them. At the turn of the century when child-rearing held little regard for progeny's interests, desires and talents, Henry and Betty Seeman probably were typical parents. Ernest, however, was no typical child. In his early thirties, about the time of his father's death, he remembered his father and himself more understandingly than would have been possible in his early years:





Father, always in rather straitened circumstances as the proprietor of a small-town printing office, was more than an average good parent. Patient, generous, impulsive, he lavished kindness upon his family, but as the flavor of my personality was, to say the least, exotic, and as child psychology was to him a thing wholly Greek, he never had the slightest understanding of the wilful and wayward duckling that the fates had brought to his eyrie.

The ultimate humiliation had come when the eleven-year-old Ernest voiced his dreams of becoming an author and an artist. The father's reaction was uncontrolled laughter whose echo followed the son and may have been in part responsible for his frenetic wanderings as he tried to "do something splendid and uncommonplace." The more kindly feeling he had developed as an adult would never erase that early scene and the revelation that his father was blind to the tragic truth: "a poor well-meaning soul that in that instant was closing forever as efficiently as with bar and bolt of iron every subtle passageway to the confidence of a sensitive child."<sup>7</sup>

Ernest's mother was "a poor country girl from Greensboro and she had just a reading and writing education. But she was not literary."<sup>8</sup> Though she knew no more of her son's inner life than did the father, she was the disciplinarian of the family. Ernest's first cousin, Julia Albright, stated that some incident relating to his birth gave the family reason to be concerned



about his mental normality. When asked if his uncommon behavior was the result of a birth injury, she said she did not know, but she seemed to think that experiences connected with his birth and infancy resulted in his childhood nickname of "Nutty."<sup>9</sup>

Seeman himself recalled two versions of his early education. In the earlier one, he recorded a deep interest in reading, writing and illustrating stories. He read Uncle Remus, poetry, anything he found around the house. Later he enjoyed Gorki and Rousseau. When taken to the first grade and tested on "cat and rat and Ned and Ted", he began to cry at the insult, because he was "reading heavy stuff by that time."<sup>10</sup> Immediately he was moved to the fourth grade and began to "meet some real teachers." Near the end of his life, Seeman fashioned a slightly different version of his schooling. The difference has mainly to do with the grades he entered from one to four, the extent of his high school education and at what ages the events of his youth occurred.<sup>11</sup>

He recalled that when he was eight years old in the third grade, a picture of a woodpecker hung on the schoolroom wall. He gazed at it until he knew the body contours and the plumage of the bird in detail. The teacher never mentioned the picture or that such birds lived just outside the schoolroom windows. The third-grader experienced "his sublimest hour" when he went into the woods at sun-up and saw the bird, as resplendent as the one on the schoolroom wall.



He continued to attend school "to within a month of diploma;" he was never, however, specific about what level of schooling he attained. In an interview at age 89, he admitted to a seventh-grade education, returning to high school in Durham for a time but he did not remember how long.<sup>12</sup> There is no evidence that he had problems in school with either learning or adapting to the discipline; all evidence indicates he simply was not interested in formal education characterized by the restraints of a classroom ("it was too damn slow for me").<sup>13</sup> In any case, there seems little question that his love for reading, his intense interest in nature, his fascination with history, his knowledge of music and his generally inquisitive attitude made him a well educated man, in comparison with his peers.

Self educated as he was, Seeman never found in text books satisfying answers to any fundamental questions he wanted to solve, and there existed no textbook that could provide answers to the questions that often must have occupied his imaginative, bright, non-conforming mind. Many years were to pass before he was able even to articulate the central question: how does a square peg fit into the round hole of the educational and vocational systems that existed in his early life? In 1929 in a monograph, "Square Pegs," more succinctly than in "The Adventures of a Square Peg," Seeman wrote what resembles an autobiographical statement:

In School the boy who is motivated by divine curiosity and iconoclastic imagination--the larva of the future





thinker, innovator or inventor--is more often than not mistaken by his teacher for a egregious dolt, or at best stigmatized as "queer," while he whose intellectual constitution most nearly resembles that of the sheep and who, like his prototype, is content to browse on stale thrice-throdden herbage, is hailed as brilliant.<sup>14</sup>

At age eighty-nine Seeman stated that his father was a fearless man, personable, honest, well-liked and skilled at his craft of printing. No such generous thoughts occurred to the thirteen-year-old Ernest when Henry Seeman announced at breakfast one morning that it was time for Ernest to go to work in the family business. He especially liked the creative aspects of the printery and even became proficient enough in the mechanical department to earn rank as journeyman linotype-machine operator. He maintained his contact with printing for many years, making as much money as possible in order to pursue "further adventurous orgies of understanding."<sup>15</sup>

Adventures young Ernest did pursue. At thirteen his father sent him to New York alone to see the big city. While there he heard stories of birds in England that were different from those in this country. He wired his father that he was taking a boat to Liverpool to see the foreign birds, and he was not disappointed. In Shropshire so beautiful was the song of a nightingale that he decided to be an ornithologist. In a three-week-trek he hiked one hundred and fifty miles, sleeping under hayracks from Liverpool to Lincoln Woods and Hull,



returning only when the weather turned cold and his money gave out.<sup>16</sup>

Interests more disparate now attracted him, this time in music. A bookbinder in the printery introduced Seeman to music; he took lessons on the clarinet and at the end of one season was a full-fledged member of the town band.<sup>17</sup> After two years of studying the compositions of classical masters, he composed seven songs and a set of waltzes which he took to Tin Pan Alley. There he sought out famous music-publishers Leo Feist, Harry von Tilzer and Charles K. Harris. The latter responded to Seeman's price of \$25,000 for his compositions by offering him \$25 which the young composer took.

His enthusiasm for music doubtless lessened by this experience, Seeman returned to outdoor activities when Dr. T. Gilbert Pearson of State Normal College of Greensboro gave him a job as assistant in making stereopticon slides from photographs of wild life. In an undated article written after he moved to Tumblin' Creek, submitted to and rejected by The Progressive Farmer, Seeman wrote of how he and Pearson travelled to the coastal swamps of North Carolina where, in secluded marshes and lakes, thousands of water fowls nested. While climbing a cypress tree to filch an egg from a fish eagle's nest, "of a size to have filled a farm wagon,"<sup>18</sup> Ernest was clawed by the returning eagles until he fell on the professor, overturning the boat, and spilling the camera and all the equipment.





Ernest saw an opportunity to meet Ernest Thompson Seton when he learned the naturalist and writer was lecturing in a nearby town. He sent Seton a gift of an assortment of badly done sketches of squirrel tracks and a family of live tree toads. After a lengthy wait in the rain at the stage door entrance, he was invited to go to dinner. Seton became a cherished friend and mentor, causing Seeman to make a prolonged study of animal portraiture. The young photographer wrote that he was encouraged in these pursuits by Louis Agassiz Fuertes, an ornithological artist whom he met while tramping in the Maine woods.

In November 1902, when Seeman met Professor Samuel Pierpont Langley, Ernest unknowingly brought together for the first time two driving forces that motivated his early life and continued to be an influence until his death--the love of nature, particularly birds, and his fascination with famous and powerful people. Seeman recalled that, at age fifteen, he was more interested in Professor Langley's condors than he was in the man who was head of the Smithsonian Institute, a great astronomer, inventor and aeronautical pioneer. In 1928, when writing of the experience, Seeman remembered Langley's stumbling over him as he sat on a flight of steps at the Smithsonian sketching a bison which stood in an out-of-the-way corner. Some days later, the grumbling professor changed into a charming man when introduced to Seeman by a scientist friend of the youth. On that day the three of them went to inspect Langley's "flying cages" and, when he learned of Ernest's enthusiasm for birds and pictures and of his



adventures with Dr. Pearson photographing the wild cormorants at their rookeries in the swamps of eastern North Carolina, he gave the young man a place as his assistant. Seeman's duty was to drop a family of condors at stated intervals down the shafts of enclosed towers built for the purpose. A battery of high-powered still cameras planted at strategic positions down the length of the tower photographed each succeeding wing beat made by the birds. At age eighty-nine Seeman remembered and described vividly how he lived in a little hut near the tower, how filthy he stayed all the time, and how he smelled: "I don't think I ever washed; I stunk like a polecat."<sup>19</sup>

Time and further experiments established Langley as the man who first demonstrated the laws of self-propelled mechanical flight. The world remembers him as achieving on May 6, 1896, the first successful flight of a heavier than air machine driven by its own power. It remembers his experiments of October and December 1903 when he failed to put into the air a full-sized machine designed to carry an operator. His trials were carried out only days before the successful flight of the Wright Brothers who had often consulted with Langley and with whom he shared the results of his experiments, thereby acting upon his philosophy that such knowledge belonged to all mankind instead of to a single patentee.

Seeman remembered Langley as a kindly gentleman with no immediate family and one whose deep love for children and interest in young people seemed to be the outlet for a naturally



affectionate nature. Like Seeman he had no patience with pedantry. He had attended Boston Latin and High School, but had never entered college, preferring to master alone mathematics, physics, history and literature. Seeman enjoyed Langley's accounts of how he traced his interest in aeronautics to his early youth when he lay on his back in the grass to watch a swallow or hawk soaring above him, or got out of his bed on autumn nights hoping to catch a glimpse of the flocks he heard migrating. He talked to Seeman of how he thought his early experiments upset all former theories that birds are supported by the air in air sacs in their wings or by any special properties of their feathers or bone. He believed that gliding was the chief principle of flight.

In their last meeting Langley showed his young helper some of his early aerodrome models, in appearance rather like later monoplanes. Seeman admired Langley's simplicity, his endless searching for the truth in man and nature, but above all, he appreciated the great man's interest in a teen-ager's inquisitive mind.

Upon returning home from Washington, he captured an adult vulture, tamed it, and kept it as a pet all summer, along with a crow and a family of jays that he domesticated. About the same time he became interested in taxidermy and stuffed everything from snakes to catfish. Seeman recalled other activities that included work on a farm and in a grocery store. Somewhat more to his liking, he traced by canoe and mapped the river courses of





"nearly all" the principal streams of North Carolina from their headwaters to the sea.<sup>20</sup>

Except for the experience with Langley in 1902, Seeman's reminiscences supplied directly no dates for his adventures. There is, however, evidence elsewhere. Who's Who in America reports that during World War I he served as a seaman, U.S.N., Mediterranean Service, 1918-1919,<sup>21</sup> and that he was married in 1919 to Durham native Julia A. Henry.<sup>22</sup> Many years later the small service pension he received constituted for a time a large part of his income.<sup>23</sup>

Up to this time Seeman's financial support had come largely from his working at the printery, and, as his father grew older, Ernest had taken on additional responsibility there. In an effort to increase his income he became, at twenty years of age, and as a result of a trade with a travelling man, the owner of a formula for a patent medicine. He recalled that he sold the formula to a Jewish speculator through an advertisement placed in a New York newspaper, making a profit of \$2,000 on the transaction. He sold croup salve, pickles, and a patented tobacco hogshead. Seeking more exciting financial areas, he went into the stock market, profited \$800 in steel the first week, lost it in a soft drink company the second week, and, he wrote, retired forever the third week. His real estate ventures in Durham were more successful. He acquired an old store building and a vacant lot, which he sold for a \$10,000 profit, money that he quickly squandered.



In rapid succession he worked in a hospital, tried his hand at fiction writing, raised dogs, built bungalows, studied botany, sold farms, worked as a newspaper reporter, and unsuccessfully tried to sell jokes to comic magazines. In his unsuccessful quest for achievement in some form of occupation, a change of luck came with his flair for originating visual ideas to be illustrated by artists on the staff of the old Life magazine. At one time he was supplying twelve artists with situation ideas, including Charles W. Kahles who drew the funny paper strip, Hairbreadth Harry. At the time Seeman took the job at the Duke Press he cancelled his contract with the Hearst Syndicate on a newspaper feature appearing in some fifty newspapers, from which he was receiving \$50 per month.

According to the Conway tapes, even Seeman's connection with his family business had a roller-coaster life as he disagreed, wrangled with, and dealt in lawsuits against his brothers, Wallace and Henry. He served as president of the Seeman Printery Company from 1917 to 1923,<sup>24</sup> but his chronicle of his association with the Seeman firm is garbled to the extent that it is impossible to figure out what he means by being "bought out" and having "sold out" his share in the business. As he described the situation:

I dealt so largely in fantasy and romance and travel and books that I was kind of aloof from the rest. I wanted the whole thing (printing company); I figured





I'd build a business and be socially inclined and freeze them all out--one of those big mistakes.<sup>25</sup>

Finally, he left the family business to start his own printing business, Seeman and Blacklaw, on Roxboro Street in Durham, but the business failed. About that time he had what he calls a "nervous breakdown, a bad breakdown" and was forced to confront the fact that his brother Wallace had succeeded where he had failed. Wallace was the businessman and he was not. "Our talents ran in different directions." Ernest's love of nature, tramping in the woods, camping and canoeing, and writing and drawing would always take precedence over business.

It was at this desperate juncture in Seeman's quixotic life that Duke University in the person of Robert L. Flowers stepped in and brought a modicum of order. Flowers, Duke vice-president for finance, mentioned to Wallace that the college administrators were building up their organization and "we're going to need a man to head up the Duke Press and it looks to me like Ernest would be just that man. He's scholarly and he's had a lot of experience reading, travel. Send him to me."<sup>26</sup> Ernest was known as an intellectual in his home town, and the Seemans had long ago proved their loyalty to Durham's tobacco interests and Trinity College. Even though described much later by a journalist as the "black sheep of a prominent family,"<sup>27</sup> Ernest "seemed to share his father's belief in a New South based on industrialization, the kind that started Durham in the first place. As Ernest put it, 'My father was gentle, and they thought



I'd be the same.'"<sup>28</sup> It was through such associations that a young printer with little more than seven years' formal education became the head of an academic press at a very young university.

Beginning many years before starting at Duke, Seeman had felt his aptitude had been slowly and subtly crystallizing into a profound interest in people, centering around character analysis that could be used to direct people into vocations that would use their strongest talents and would allow them to lead lives fulfilled to their greatest potential--simply put, round pegs in round holes. According to Seeman, his most successful vocational guidance occurred while in the United States Navy, 1918-1919. On shipboard he met a Fula who worked in the boiler room. After observing and analyzing the stoker's facial expression, his voice and handwriting, Seeman told the Sudanese that he had unusual humanitarian instincts and a scientific turn with a feeling for clinical pursuits. This evaluation so motivated the stoker that he became a distinguished member of the Egyptian medical corps. Seeman's account alone supports this story, but it is evident that the analyst did not feel constrained by the fact that his knowledge for such manipulations of human behavior came only from his extreme interest in the subject and his possession of "mysteriously accurate intuitions which to this day have remained my most infallible counselors and which I am now convinced are the most unusual part of my own hereditary make-up."<sup>29</sup>

Literature of any kind on vocational testing and guidance was sparse to non-existent until the 1930s, so it was impossible



for him to have benefited from reading on the subject. By 1929 Seeman felt knowledgeable enough to write that "the face is an index to the mind" but that the texture and coloring of hair or skin, the shape of hands, the gait, the very timbre of the voice, all are less commonly observed as heralds of the personality behind them.<sup>30</sup> With the fervor that often accompanied his statements and actions, Seeman added that the "efficacy of [character analysis] will always depend largely upon the diagnosticians's powers of observation and deduction, and upon his sympathetic ability to project himself into the personality of his subject." The inference is that Seeman himself possessed the powers of observation and the sympathetic ability to analyze the observations to the extent that vocational misfits would be "as surely preventable by the application of practical psychology as are illiteracy and undernourishment--and that there is really no more place for it in an enlightened civilization than there is for cannibalism, war or witchcraft." He pointed particularly to handwriting as a tool for analyzing character, and letters from President Theodore Roosevelt, Elbert Hubbard, John Burroughs and William McDougall attest to his uncanny ability to infer character traits from handwriting.<sup>31</sup>

With the offer from Duke University, Seeman felt he was being received into the place where his peg would exactly fit. His extraordinary hyperbole in describing that place suggests that he was more romantic than realistic about a part-time job that gave him the responsibility of managing the business of a





university press whose editorial decisions would likely be the responsibility of well-educated faculty members:

In a great American University by some poetic justice of heaven the squarest of square pegs now plies his thought at disentangling the talents of misfit men and women; and past the vortex of his busy, beatific days there whirls a marvelous myriad processional of genius. But while, since the days of his own drifting, he has exhausted every technique of formal psychology, he has never found any theory as effective for penetrating the depths of human nature as sympathy. Or for staking El Dorados in the dross of common clay, no intelligence test as electric and vitalizing as that common touch acquired in the long struggle to understand his own gifts of hand and heart!<sup>32</sup>



## II. A Place for a Square Peg

When Robert L. Flowers offered Ernest Seeman part-time employment at the Duke Press, he leaped at the chance to work with educators. "Those men who gave their lives to inspiring youth to making the world safe for honest thinking had my profound respect," he said. He saw the ivory towers of academia as having magical powers to absolve their inhabitants of all human frailties--jealousy, anger, hate--and saw his entrance into their midst an avenue that would give focus to his own restless quest. Though he said he was taking a fifty percent cut in salary, Seeman was ecstatic: "I was filled with joy and hope. Now I could do something altruistic."<sup>1</sup>

On October 15, 1925, when he began the new job, Seeman was not inaugurating a new department; only the school's name and his position in an expanding department were new. For him, however, it was a new environment, one with a tradition of scholarship and academic freedom where, he thought, his independent thinking would have free rein and, he hoped, earn approval.

Seeman's own department, the press, in particular had a heritage of independent thinking. In 1897 Trinity College began sponsoring the publication of "The Papers of the Trinity College Historical Society" which were distributed to members of the society and were on exchange with other institutions. In 1902, an honorary scholastic society on campus, "9019," sponsored the launching of The South Atlantic Quarterly, a periodical later





published by the Duke Press, to carry contributions by members of the faculty and outsiders.<sup>2</sup> The Quarterly, the second oldest such journal in the country, early gained prominence when, in October, 1903, it carried an article by one of its founders, historian John Spencer Bassett, which attacked the North Carolina Democrats for their calculated exploitation of white racism.

Angry Democrats, led by Josephus Daniels of the Raleigh News and Observer, demanded that Bassett be fired for his racial "heresy," a charge precipitated by his statement that Booker T. Washington was "a great and good man, a Christian statesman and take him all in all the greatest man, save General Lee, born in the South in a hundred years."<sup>3</sup> Amid great political, religious and academic turmoil, the trustees of Trinity College, by a vote of eighteen to seven, supported Bassett. The trustees declared that Trinity was committed to cherish a sincere spirit of tolerance and "could not be a party to anything that encouraged intellectual intimidation." The trustees asserted they were particularly unwilling to lend themselves to any tendency to destroy or limit academic freedom.<sup>4</sup>

Seeman's company printed The South Atlantic Quarterly. Remembering Seeman's statement that he had always read everything that he "could get his hands on," one can imagine him, already at work there at age sixteen, glorying at seeing an affirmation of freedom of thought and independence of ideas as unequivocal as his own. The college affirmed its position in The Quarterly the following year in an essay by William Preston Few, professor of



English and Dean, who would become president of Trinity College in 1910 and of Duke University in December, 1924. Few wrote that "education in the true sense of the word is now everywhere regarded as the surest and quickest method of promoting human progress, intelligence, and happiness."<sup>5</sup> He explained that it should be pursued in a manner to develop individual talents and interests, whether academic, industrial or manual.

In 1921 the Trinity College Press was founded and it published four books under its imprint. After Trinity College became one of the undergraduate colleges of Duke University on December 11, 1924, the press became the Duke University Press.

Little wonder that Ernest Seeman was overjoyed to become part of an organization whose purpose was to make available to the public scholarly works of the highest quality. To bring his printing expertise to an expanding university press would create the perfect milieu for his inquisitive attitude and might also open an avenue for his particular interest in helping young people find a vocation that would allow them to lead fulfilling lives.

At an annual salary of \$2,500 for part-time work, Seeman began his association with the Duke Press. A year was to pass before he wrote to Flowers, asking to have his part-time status and salary reviewed so that if his services had not been satisfactory he might resign, or, in the case of the hoped-for adequate remuneration, he might settle down at the press as a life business.<sup>6</sup> The university agreed to make him full time,





and, beginning on October 15, 1926, his salary was \$3,700 per year. At the time he entered Duke's employ his salary from the Seeman Printery, dividends from the printery and royalties from a newspaper syndicate amounted to between \$5,500 and \$6,000.

Although he devoted no time to the printery, it, being interested in the successful founding of a press which would likely increase its business, paid him during 1925-26 a salary of \$2,000 so that he could accept Duke's half-time offer of \$2,500. Seeman had resigned as an officer in the printery, disposed of his stock in the corporation, and cancelled his contract with the Hearst Syndicate. It also can be inferred from the wrangling that went on among the brothers that Wallace and Henry Seeman were pleased to see Ernest established in what appeared to be a far happier situation for their brother than the printery and one removed from them.

Seeman was installed in a small office in East Duke Building on East Campus where the press office remained throughout his tenure. In a bold step in his second year on the job he asked Flowers that he be notified in writing of the budget appropriation for the press and that such appropriation take into consideration the overlapping fiscal years that resulted from the necessity for letting contracts to publish books in the fall and spring. Specifically, he asked for either working capital or a contingent reserve to take care of the inevitable difference in the budget and the estimated costs for the year, a policy set by several other university presses. Further, uncertainty occurred





when magazines such as The South Atlantic Quarterly and The Hispanic American Historical Review were expanding, a desirable growth editorially, but one resulting in added expenses and less revenue because of cancelled advertising and increased payments to contributors, both beyond the control of the press. Seeman made the request for the more flexible budgeting procedures so that the press could pay printers promptly, a policy that would provide better prices and service.<sup>7</sup>

Two months later Seeman answered Flowers' request for a preliminary report on the establishment of an acquisitions division of the library.<sup>8</sup> The report pointed out that "the only need for the Press is to increase the distribution, geographically and numerically, of our books and periodicals by exchange." The need could only be filled by an alert bibliophile who possessed the expertise to advise the press and library; such a person, according to Seeman, was available in Louis Tappe Ibbotson, already employed as reference librarian. During the two years he worked at Duke, Ibbotson was the only person on the eight-member staff in 1925-26 (twelve in 1926-27) to hold a degree in library science.<sup>9</sup> Seeman was critical of more than lack of professional training. He complained that J. P. Breedlove, the head librarian, was "apparently void of ideas [on the acquisitions division of the library], opposed to innovation and appreciates anything that can be had for nothing and without effort, but seems powerless to think about the matter in terms of coordination or organization."<sup>10</sup> The manager of the press



asked that the library create its own order department, rather than continuing to have a New York dealer, G. E. Stechert, serve that function. The report ended with the recommendation that a modern acquisitions division in the library would be beneficial to both the library and the press, with the latter to be handicapped until its formation.

Four months later Seeman again wrote to Flowers, asking that the library and press work out differences occurring when material was transferred to the library from the press--books published by the press or exchanged by it, subscriptions of periodicals exchanged, and books sent to the press as publishers' samples. In effect Seeman was asking that the press and the library work out an arrangement satisfactory and advantageous to both parties, in keeping with the idea that the press "conceives it not only to be good business to thus extend the distribution of our products, but also that it is the duty of the university (through our department) to cooperate with and encourage amicable relationships with such institutions."<sup>11</sup>

Still trying to improve the organization of the press, in a letter addressed to the Press Committee, but sent to Flowers, Seeman, on January 18, 1928, asked for an additional employee so that the press could build a cohesive, self-perpetuating editorial department with permanent paid understudies to organize routine in such a way that an enforced absence or change of faculty editors would not cripple the work. He stated that, with a new periodical likely to be added in the fall of 1928, added





personnel was necessary if the Press Committee desired the organization to proceed in a sound and normal growth.<sup>12</sup>

Seeman's concern in 1927 and 1928 with the daily problems of the cramped press office and its personnel did not preclude his extending his energies to wider areas. His ubiquitous curiosity alongside his fascination with successful, affluent people resulted in two unlikely issues from the Duke Press, books by James A. Thomas of White Plains, New York. Thomas was no stranger to the Dukes and the university. His father and grandfather knew Washington Duke when they met in the South peddling tobacco.<sup>13</sup> They were all Methodists and Duke came on several occasions to Lawsonville, Rockingham County, N.C., Thomas's boyhood home. His uncle, James A. Thomas, for whom he was named, had attended Trinity College for one term before enlisting in the Confederate Army. Reared on a tobacco farm, young Thomas left it to sell tobacco products. He spent thirty-five years in the Far East, the first man sent by James B. Duke to open up a market for tobacco there. As chief of the British-American Tobacco Company in China, he became a close friend as well as business associate of James B. Duke. A successful business man, an experienced trader and traveller, he was knowledgeable about the social, economic and political problems of that part of the world.

As early as 1899 he presented to Trinity College a book on the Far East, resolving to continue to send any books on the subject that he read and found interesting. By 1916 many books



from Thomas were notable accessions to the Trinity College Library, according to Earl Porter in Trinity and Duke, but they were not supplemented by purchases in sufficient quantity to establish the beginnings of a research library.<sup>14</sup> Upon his return to this country, a reasonable assumption can be made that he had more leisure and would be interested in a project that combined his knowledge of the Far East with the university endowed by his friend. It can further be reasonably assumed that a business man with a higher education limited to a four-months' course at Eastman's National Business College at Poughkeepsie, New York, where James B. Duke also studied briefly,<sup>15</sup> would be flattered to be invited by a university press to write a book on his experiences in the Far East and insights into the Chinese people and their customs.

In July 1927 Ernest Seeman capitalized on Thomas's susceptibility to flattery when he invited the businessman to write such a book, telling him that he was so impressed with a speech he had heard Thomas deliver that he remembered it almost word for word. He sent a catalogue containing a list of the publications of the Duke Press during its two-years' existence and looked to Thomas to help him move the press beyond its provincial focus: "However, just between ourselves it is rather a sore spot with me that so many of our books turn on sectional history, and it is my very earnest desire to procure manuscripts of wider interest." Seeman asked Thomas, in the event he was not interested in writing the book, if he knew of anyone, an American



teacher or trader who would be glad of an opportunity to write a new interpretation of Chinese life. "I hope you understand that it is not the ordinary, dull dissertative book that I am interested in but something better." Seeman sent a copy of his letter to Flowers, with a cover letter that suggested a hidden motive: "Doubtless you meet with Mr. Thomas from time to time. Might he not be a prospect for some sort of Endowment for the Press?"<sup>16</sup>

Thomas accepted Seeman's invitation and in December 1928 the book, A Pioneer Tobacco Merchant in the Orient, was published. Both it and the second book, Trailing Trade a Million Miles,<sup>17</sup> are handsome volumes printed on high quality paper; the second book had hand-cut rough edges. Dan Ross, current marketing manager of the Duke Press, describes them as "interesting and chatty, not the sort of thing the Press did before or after." He added that they were more expensively produced than other titles of the time and that the color plates in the first book were of a superior quality not used again until the 1950s.<sup>18</sup> The two volumes are evidence that Seeman and Duke paid special attention to Thomas and his literary works.

W. K. Boyd had endorsed Seeman's invitation to Thomas and was given the job of getting the tobaccoman's manuscript in shape to publish. Thomas revealed in one sentence his naivete in the area of his new activity. In July 1927 he wrote, "As far as the editing of the manuscript is concerned I wish to say that it would only be a matter of punctuation and the placing of the





photographs which I would send with the manuscript of the book."<sup>19</sup> The Duke Press had contracted to pay all the expenses contingent on the publication and Boyd's patience and literary skill must have been tried to get the manuscript into acceptable form.<sup>20</sup> Thomas, however, proved to be an apt pupil. Within a month he wrote: "I will adopt suggestions of Dr. Boyd in having an underlying principal through the book in each story."<sup>21</sup> As late as March 1928 Seeman and Boyd were still working. Seeman wrote:

I am glad you approve our idea regarding structure of your book. Considerable material can be used, some cannot. As you are preparing new copy we will delay the use of scissors and paste until you send us what you are writing.<sup>22</sup>

Dozens of letters, pictures, drawings and coins were sent back and forth to New York before the book was ready in the fall of 1928.

Beginning in February 1928, Thomas and Seeman began an exchange of letters that concerned their mutual interest in promoting international good will between China and America via Duke University. They wrote of an International Publicity Bureau, scholarships for Chinese students and the possibility of translating into Chinese significant speeches made at Duke. Any proposals made by Seeman carried a note explaining that they were personal reactions and would be reviewed by administration officials. The early correspondence was directed to Seeman who



forwarded it to Flowers.<sup>23</sup> Flowers apparently had not met Thomas until after the first Seeman-Thomas correspondence. Beginning in April the correspondence was addressed to Flowers, a change that suggests that Thomas realized that Seeman's job was not of an administrative level that could formulate policy and plans for areas of new development in the university. That change did not appear to make any difference in the cordial relations between Seeman and Thomas as later letters refer to the two families visiting,<sup>24</sup> and there are accounts of Seeman befriending two Chinese girls who were daughters of one of Thomas's friends and who attended St. Mary's School in Raleigh.<sup>25</sup>

With the death of Benjamin N. Duke on January 8, 1929, Thomas turned his attention from the Far East project to creating and organizing "The Duke Memorial." His project to raise a million dollars, collected from the employees of tobacco and power companies, associates of the Dukes in New York, and other groups, for a suitable memorial for the three Duke philanthropists ended with the stock market crash of 1929. The approximately \$135,000 raised contributed to the creation of a small memorial chapel in the Duke University Chapel, the three marble sarcophagi that rest there, and the bronze statue of James B. Duke that stands in front of the chapel.<sup>26</sup>

From relatively small strokings of a man's ego can come large results, but there is no way to evaluate the evidence so as to know the effect of Seeman's efforts. Thomas had long been a removed friend of the university, and the growth caused by the





endowment pointed up needs that required scope, organization and knowledge that only entrepreneurs like Thomas could furnish. Duke was fortunate to be the beneficiary of his largess.

After the experience the press had with the first book, one member of the Press Committee wanted to steer clear of Thomas's second manuscript. History Professor J. Fred Rippy asked Flowers about the possibility of rejecting the second manuscript. Rippy suggested that it could be done by telling Thomas that a second publication would detract from his first volume, or that a manuscript committee which Flowers could not overrule had rejected it, or that the interesting information it contained would be kept with other valuable manuscripts in the library. Rippy stated that in the case of the Thomas manuscript "certain special aspects must be considered, but I think the entire Press Committee would like to be relieved of the responsibility of getting another volume in shape for Mr. Thomas." Rippy's feeling was that "to make a good book out of the manuscript would require a great amount of work which did not, strictly speaking, fall within the province of the Press whose main duty was to select and publish manuscripts already in good condition, not to write books and place the name of someone else on the outside."<sup>27</sup>

Rippy's recommendations were not followed, for the book was published in November 1931. On December 7, 1931, Seeman wrote to Thomas thanking him for the \$1,700 check to cover publishing costs. Two additional paragraphs spelled out messages that he wanted to be sure Thomas received: "You should know by this time



without my telling you that anything in the world I can do for you will always be done with the greatest zest and cheerfulness. So don't forget to call on me when you wish performed any 'dirty work at the cross-roads,'" and "we also thank you enormously for your recent promise to look around for someone who may be willing to endow the Duke Press for a monograph series such as we have been discussing."<sup>28</sup> There is evidence that the monograph series of which Seeman spoke was a hoped-for publication on his theory of character analysis that used testing to discover the talents of students. Based on the tests, they were given vocational guidance, a subject Seeman had discussed with Thomas as early as December 18, 1928. Thomas was made a trustee of the University in 1936, and after his death in 1940, his handsome collection of Oriental rugs, furniture, porcelain, art and books were assembled in the James A. Thomas Memorial Room which was opened in the Woman's College Library on December 1, 1942. On a shelf there was a volume, the Life of Cecil Rhodes, by Howland Henson, that Thomas had sent to the Trinity College Library forty-three years earlier.

Amid his efforts to gain support for the press outside the university community, Seeman protected the interests of the press as best he could. On January 18, 1928, he again addressed the Press Committee, asking that a source of support other than the press be found to fund the Trinity College Historical Papers. When the press was formed it inherited from the historical society the publication of the papers. The society, however,





supported the publication to the extent of only \$6 in 1927, with total expenses approximating \$500. Fifty-four exchange subscribers furnished exchange material turned over to the library for which the press was not reimbursed; twenty-six paid subscribers furnished subscription revenues of \$26. Seeman did not want to see the publication discontinued, because he felt it was better to "receive the cumulative benefit of its tradition rather than to start a new magazine in its place." He recommended that some source other than the press fund the publication.<sup>29</sup>

In February 1928 Seeman reported to Flowers on his round of inspection trips to other university presses--Harvard, Yale and Oxford University Press, American Branch. Seeman's observations on this trip indicated that his experience at the Seeman Printery was valuable in judging the printing operations of the university presses and that he was anxious to make contacts that would help him to improve the editorial operations. Officials at the Harvard Press conveyed the impression that their press was breaking even financially. A tour of the printing plant by Seeman revealed antiquated methods and equipment, and the statement regarding profit resulted from the policy of the university in carrying the press and the printing plant as one item in the budget, and in this way, the university paid the healthy annual deficit Seeman felt surely existed. He compared Harvard's volume and costs with the Seeman Printery, the detail of whose business he knew from hands-on experience, and concluded





that to mention breaking even was a preposterous statement. The "venerable gentlemen of a past age" with their medieval routine, when asked what books a university press should publish, answered: "Scholarship is the first consideration. When we publish a book that sells we know that we have made a mistake and should not have published it." While ostensibly supporting a recent move to form a University Press Association, Harvard officials were pessimistic that such an effort would succeed.<sup>30</sup>

Seeman contrasted what he regarded as the moribund Harvard operation with the Yale Press, which he regarded as efficient both in production and distribution. He also found the Oxford University Press, American Branch, modern in its approach. When asked how their officials chose what books a university press should publish, Manager Captain Cumberledge answered that the Oxford University Press published only books that were the thorough product of scholarly minds, books produced and edited by the best brains. He added that they also believed that the current needs of society must be served and every manuscript must be subjected to the test of whether or not it will be of usefulness to humanity. Captain Cumberledge was enthusiastic about the formation of a University Press Association and assured Seeman that he would cooperate in every way possible.<sup>31</sup>

Seeman continued to visit other university press organizations, and his next report, May 25, 1928, was from nearer home, the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. He recounted the organization of the thirteen-member Board of



Governors (corresponding to Duke's Press Board) and the route that submitted and solicited manuscripts took through academic scrutiny to authorization for publication by the Finance Committee (three members of the Board of Governors plus the manager of the press). The final paragraph bears quoting:

The manager of the press has complete editorial supervision. Under his direction the stuff is edited by competent women and the format is worked out entirely between himself and the printer. Of course he is glad to avail himself of suggestions from any interested persons but he is entirely free from pestiferous pedants in his authority to edit and print the books as he sees fit. Of course he is always directly responsible to the Board of Governors.<sup>32</sup>

On the same day he wrote the report from the University of North Carolina Press, Seeman wrote to Flowers with suggestions for reorganization of the editorial department of the Duke Press. W. K. Boyd of the History Department, closely associated with the press and editor of the South Atlantic Quarterly, concurred in all points except one. Seeman recommended the abolition of the post of faculty editor, that branch of work to be placed under his supervision, with an editorial assistant to be hired. With the change in organization the editorial department would be stabilized by permanent paid helpers instead of having faculty members serve as editors. The existing system resulted in faculty members' being diverted from their teaching, and often





bringing to the editorial board a bias inherent toward their particular field with its resulting factional atmosphere. It also allowed persons inexperienced in the practical methods of publishing and distributing to make decisions more efficiently left to persons competent in printing procedures. Seeman believed that the system in existence caused "an overbalance of pedantic methods in the editing of manuscripts that is an inordinate splitting of hairs, over-punctuating, etc., that at times reached the point of sheer nonsense."

Seeman explained that the point on which he and Boyd were not in agreement concerned Boyd's opinion that a certain unnamed member of the History Department should head a sub-committee to direct the editorial workers in the press office. This point was the first evidence of disagreement between Boyd and Seeman and suggests that it foreshadowed the later airing of their different philosophies regarding their respective positions in the press organization. Seeman argued that the removal of the one member from the board was the linchpin on which his reorganization depended, because that member "as well as others is being continually consulted for suggestions which at times prove valuable and at other times worthless." Seeman felt that the resulting divided authority impaired his efficiency as editor and manager of the Duke Press. He emphasized that in an effort to rid the board of troublesome officiousness or jealousy caused by over-representation of one department, no department, especially the English and History departments, should have more than one



representative on the board. Seeman anticipated and was preparing for the day when, like the Yale Press, Duke would have a full-time paid editor. He explained that the editorial layouts of both Yale and the University of North Carolina appeared to fit the needs of the Duke Press. He added that if the Duke administration saw fit to reorganize the press as he suggested, he would "guarantee satisfactory results at the minimum cost and with the minimum of red tape, which is what you are interested in after all."<sup>33</sup>

Seeman was by no means the only one to see that the press needed to be upgraded. In 1928, Paul Baum, a Duke professor of English then visiting at Cambridge, Massachusetts, and member of the Press Committee, wrote to Dr. Wilburt C. Davison, recently arrived at Duke from Johns Hopkins Medical School and appointed dean of Duke's embryonic Medical School. In the letter which Davison forwarded to Flowers, Baum complained about the shortcomings of the Duke Press--that the editorship was insufficient and the catalogue "leaves me very, very cold." Baum recommended that the university reject the hiring of professional publishers who would handle the entire operation of the press and "poke around till a man is discovered who at least knows publishing. Get such a man and then for the present or near future rely on Fowler [Ed Fowler of Seeman Printery, expert in all facets of the printing business] and the Seeman Printery. . . . All this is on the assumption that it is quite impossible to find a man capable of doing both the editorial and publishing





work together." Although Seeman's name is not mentioned, these statements strongly suggest that his letters requesting a reorganization of the press had not been answered because the administration, sensitive to probable faculty concerns about the difference between printing in which Seeman was experienced --and publishing--in which he was not, was considering a reorganization that would not include him.<sup>34</sup>

Undaunted, Seeman appealed to Flowers three months later for an opportunity to appear before the Press Committee so that it could come to a decision.<sup>35</sup> Five months later a follow-up communication from Seeman to Flowers showed that still he had received no answer to the plans for the reorganization of the Editorial Department of the press.<sup>36</sup> Seeman recapitulated that executives of university presses at Yale, Columbia, Harvard and Princeton had all endorsed his plan to abolish the cumbersome professorial board in favor of a manager responsible to the president [Flowers] who would be responsible only to the university trustees. Seeman asked that the present form of organization be automatically dissolved by the administration and an editorial board be formed with J. Fred Rippey, professor of history, as chairman. He also proposed an executive board or committee composed of the business brains of the university: viz., Flowers, Frank Brown, chairman of the English Department, and C. B. Markham, treasurer of the university. Seeman concluded: "With such an organization as this your Press can move forward, but without it I am afraid you will find with increasing





emphasis that it can get no further than an auto which has plenty of brakes and horn--but no wheels." The next day a note to Few added: "I believe Dr. Rippy can corroborate to your satisfaction every point I made in memorandum entrusted to you today. In fact, I would be very grateful if you would privately request the benefit of his very broad experience."<sup>37</sup>

Seeman's relation with Rippy seems to have been cordial, a feeling not extended to all professors who worked as editors with the press. In a series of letters between Seeman and Boyd, beginning on December 10, 1929, and extending nine days, the manager and the editor exchanged barbs that suggest hostility deeper than the immediate issues being discussed. Seeman said he could not perform his duties as long as Boyd, as editor of The South Atlantic Quarterly, appeared haphazard in his treatment of correspondence, books and manuscripts pertaining to the publication of The Quarterly. In the course of this controversy Seeman wrote Boyd: "I am sure that both you and I have no desire to carry on like two cats in a bag." It ended, "I hope you will think well of this idea for otherwise I see no hope except to keep on scrapping, as I am fully as zealous as yourself in performing what I regard as my proper function."

Bickering continued, for a letter from Boyd informed Flowers that Seeman had been obstinate and, "frankly, I cannot serve as editor if I must take orders from a man who knows nothing of the problems involved in editorial work." In that sentence Boyd stated a fundamental problem that existed: Seeman



considered himself adequate in both printing and editing, and Boyd and other members of the faculty saw him as adequate only as regarded the printing work of the press. Boyd ended his letter by saying that at present the books and manuscripts of The South Atlantic Quarterly, the alleged subject of confrontation, were at that time packed in a box which was lying in the hall of East Duke Building, subject to theft and loss.<sup>38</sup>

Since Boyd, an alumnus of Trinity College who had returned there to teach after obtaining a Ph.D. at Columbia in 1906, was a leading member of the Duke faculty and a well-known scholar, Seeman had managed to collide with a powerful antagonist. All evidence points to the great contributions that Boyd made in the quality and quantity of the books that up to that time and continuing until his death in 1938 were acquired by the university library. His reputation as historian, bibliophile, and faculty member devoted to the enrichment and growth of Duke University, particularly its library, is a matter of agreement among his contemporaries and later scholars in the humanities. Statements of praise, however, are qualified by "but Boyd was difficult," a fact confirmed by Flowers in a letter to G. G. Allen, chairman of the Duke Endowment. On November 16, 1933, after Boyd had asked the endowment for yet more funds for library acquisitions, Flowers wrote Allen, "The whole trouble with him [Boyd] is that he does not wish to comply with our rules governing the purchasing department. My suggestion is that you do not acknowledge receipt of the communication."<sup>39</sup>





Boyd's reputation extended far beyond Duke. Randolph G. Adams, head of the University of Michigan's Clements Library, and former historian at Trinity, declared in a letter to Flowers:

Boyd is one man who has done more to keep up your reputation for sound scholarship than any man you have. . . . But Boyd was known to scholarship long before the great windfall to Trinity [in December 1924] and Boyd is the man whose name comes to one's lips, when at any convention or meeting of a learned society in the humanities, the name of Duke comes up.<sup>40</sup>

In response, Flowers wrote that he agreed with all the praise heaped on Boyd and that he had done all he could to help in Boyd's efforts to build up the library and added "you know him as well as I do." Flowers felt that Boyd's complaints to Adams, which precipitated the letter that prompted the communication to Flowers, were prompted by his failure to receive from the Duke Endowment all the money he had requested to purchase further collections for the library. Flowers added that "to the limit of our ability we are cooperating with the men who have ideas and who are really accomplishing something."<sup>41</sup> Beside such praise both from a Duke official and a professional historian-librarian, criticism from Seeman about the methods of emptying a mail basket, filing manuscripts or shelving review books appears inconsequential.

Although far from the type of reorganization that Seeman had requested, a change in the structure of the press did occur in



1929 with the arrival of a newspaperman, Henry Randolph Dwire. He became director of Duke Alumni Affairs and Public Relations, a position which automatically included directorship of the press. Innocuous as these titles may seem, the position had the power to create whatever image was desired by the administration for the emerging Duke University, because in Dwire's office all releases to the media were edited and all speaking engagements by persons representing the university were arranged. Sometime later he had charge of Duke's first Appointments Office, at a time in the depression when contacts between available jobs and job-seekers meant economic survival.<sup>42</sup>

Dwire was an excellent choice for the job. An alumnus of Trinity College, he came from a prominent, wealthy family (his mother was Mary Hanes, sister of P. H., J. W., and Phillip Hanes) of Winston-Salem where he had recently sold the Winston-Salem Sentinel. In his home town he had been prominent in community affairs, the Methodist Church, Rotary Club (District Governor 1929-30), as well a member of the boards of state organizations (N.C. State Hospital for the Insane and State School Commission, among others). He brought to the Duke administration the expertise of his public relations with news media of the area, his long-standing contacts with Trinity College alumni, a writing ability far superior to that required by any newspaper, and a reputation as raconteur, after-dinner speaker, expert in foods, and shrewd businessman. On arrival he became editor of The South Atlantic Quarterly and The Duke Alumni Register. He had



responsibility for the publication of all bulletins and catalogues of the university, was secretary to the Athletic Council, as well as official host of the university.

Whether because of the multiplicity of his responsibilities or his problems in moving around because of extreme obesity, Dwire as director of the press was not active in the daily operations of the organization. Exie Duncan stated that from the time she was employed as secretary to the press on April 11, 1932, until Dwire's death on July 17, 1944, he came to the press office on East Campus only once. If any matters were to be discussed with him, the person wanting to get his advice or discuss a matter went to his office on West Campus or talked to him by telephone.<sup>43</sup>

There is no evidence of the in-house factions or compromises that must have occurred within the administration and the press before a form of reorganization was decided upon, but Baum's partiality to local handling of the press prevailed. In the "Reports to the President" in April 1932, Dwire as director of the press, wrote that because of its rapid growth and attendant problems, the press had been reorganized in 1930, with an Editorial Board that passed upon manuscripts submitted for publication (Professor J. Fred Rippey as editor) and a Board of Management that handled business affairs (Ernest A. Seeman as Manager). Forty-six of the forty-nine books published since the organization of the press had been published between 1925 and





1931, in addition to the publication of seven scholarly periodicals.<sup>44</sup>

Dwire's reports about the reorganization of the press indicated a compromise with Seeman, whether intentional or not. Rippy, Seeman's choice, was made editor and Seeman himself was manager only in business affairs, not manager of the press with complete editorial supervision as he had wished when making his earlier presentations. Dwire's prestige was further recognized when he was made vice-president of the university in 1941, after Flowers succeeded to the presidency upon the death of Few in 1940.

Seeman was not influencing the character of the press in the way he would have liked. He did, however, make one contribution that remains. Early in his association with the press, he designed the colophon that is still in use. It is a stylized white flower on a lined, oval background. Veritas Florescens, "Truth Flowering," cuts across the stem of the flower. The conception of the design came to him as a symbol of the old Egyptian idea of the white flower of truth arising from the mud of mystery and ignorance."<sup>45</sup>



## III. The Idealist

Notwithstanding his disappointment at having the administration fail to approve the changes he proposed in the organization of its editorial board, Ernest Seeman's relations with the administration, his staff and students were cordial during his early years at Duke. Carolyn Shooter Kyles (Duke '26) began doing secretarial work in the press office immediately upon her graduation and remained there for four years. She recalled the many professors who came into the office to ask for information that Seeman had gained from his prodigious reading. Paull Baum and A. C. Jordan from the English Department, Dean Justin Miller of the Law School; A. S. Pearse, Zoologist; William McDougall, J. B. Rhine and Helge Lundholm, Psychology Department; and William K. Boyd, from the History Department--all were frequent visitors. Mrs. Kyles wrote: "I do not recall hearing even one adverse criticism of Mr. Seeman at any time. If anyone in the administration was antagonistic to him I knew nothing of it and I believe I would have heard it."<sup>1</sup> In another letter she added: "I can speak only for the man I knew for four years--from 1926 to 1930. He was not only a smart man but a kind gentleman, thoughtful of others in many ways."

Exie Duncan joined the press office in 1932. Her reports of working for Seeman were as glowing as those of his first secretary:





Of all the people I ever worked for, Mr. Seeman was the finest boss of all. . . . He made me feel I was a partner--not just hired help--with him in carrying on the Press work. He assigned me duties I never would have thought I could do, and his confidence in me helped my own self-confidence. People of all ranks, ages, etc. came to him to talk about their troubles. [He helped] countless hundreds, and I am sure he saved scores from suicide or alcoholism or worse. Working for him two and a half years was a great blessing for me.<sup>2</sup>

When Seeman was eighty-three years old, in April 1971, he recalled the early days and his cubby-hole office in East Duke where more and more students came to visit and talk with him of their problems and aspirations.<sup>3</sup> Dean Alice Baldwin of the Woman's College frequently came from her neighboring office to talk about the troublesome affairs in her college. When Seeman remarked that Duke was the dullest place he was ever in, with its unnatural strictures and only football and prayer meetings as amusements, the two decided to offer another kind of activity--hiking into Orange and Durham Counties with campfires, singing, food, and hikers drawn from visiting dignitaries, heads of departments, freshmen, and all in between.

There is abundant evidence that, in the late 1920s, the atmosphere at Duke was restrictive and recreational activities few, as Seeman claimed. The college was ahead of its time in the



treatment of women, however. Old Trinity College in Randolph County had begun admitting a few women as day students in 1878.<sup>4</sup> Girls were allowed to smoke at Duke University in 1931, at a time when neighboring girls' schools shipped students for smoking.<sup>5</sup> Who urged this policy on the university is not known, but the heavy odor of tobacco (fragrance to some) wafting from the Duke factories on West Main Street in Durham half a mile out to the Duke campus, was a constant reminder of a product intimately associated with the university and advertised as pleasurable for women as well as men.

Seeman's casual and retiring demeanor allowed him to make friends easily and his wide circle of friends often included unlikely people. One such friend was Edmund D. Soper, newly-arrived vice-president of student life of the university and dean of the School of Religion, who helped in February 1928 to provide the occasion for Seeman's first confrontation with the administration. It was what he called his indoctrination in "academic chicanery," whose precept was: "That intellectual leadership must never take a stand against anything that certain senators or financiers might favor."<sup>6</sup> Seeman, an avowed atheist,<sup>7</sup> found a fellow pacifist in the minister, and the two of them, under the auspices of a fifty-member citizens' committee composed of representatives from Durham civic organizations, clubs, and industry, as well as university leaders, organized a peace rally to protest a \$740 million naval appropriations bill in Congress.<sup>8</sup> Shortly before the meeting, according to Seeman's





account, Dean Wannamaker sent for him, told him that he had invited a speaker to the campus without official sanction, that the university had subtle interests in armament bills because aluminum securities comprised a substantial part of the endowment, and that members of the endowment's board of trustees owned plants that manufactured basic chemicals used in munitions. The dean informed Seeman that he was ignorant of the practical side of college administration. To further complicate matters, the invited speaker was William L. Poteat, president-emeritus of Wake Forest College and long-time friend of Few and the university.<sup>9</sup> When Seeman offered to withdraw the invitation, the Dean decided that would be a breach of etiquette and, with a warning to Seeman to watch his step in the future, grudgingly let the meeting proceed.

Soper's liberal approach appealed to Seeman. Soper advocated a broader application of religion and its relationship to college life than was represented by Duke's vesper and chapel services. He made arrangements with James DeHart, director of Physical Education, to give sex education classes to freshman physical education classes in the fall of 1926. Soper expected to address those classes, speaking from the standpoint of the church and religion.

Soper also tackled "one of the most difficult questions we have to deal with in our college life. I have reference to dancing." He recognized that there was dancing at the University, with a number of dances being chaperoned by officials





or those loosely connected with officials of the university, thus giving dancing a semi-official sanction. Soper felt that to forbid it would drive it underground and that the only way to assure parents that dancing was being conducted under favorable conditions was for the university to assume control over it, "to take hold vigorously in order that the institution which is now arising will be one where every safeguard which can be placed around our young people is being provided for." Soper's positions regarding sex and dancing must have appeared radical to the administration because these positions lessened the restriction on students but the widening freedom afforded by such positions would surely have met Seeman's approval and rendered as approving irony his description of Soper as "impractical."<sup>10</sup>

Before many months elapsed an incident occurred which indicated that the university should already "have taken hold vigorously." In December 1926 the junior class petitioned the faculty and officers of Duke for permission to have a dance on the college grounds "hoping to contribute something to the social life of the students which in our estimation is lacking, and which can best be met by dancing under the proper supervision with chaperones approved by the Faculty."<sup>11</sup> Wannamaker replied to the petition by stating that the class must "wait a while for a final answer to it" because those with administrative authority felt they should defer to the board of trustees in the matter because it had been the policy of the college for many years not



to have dances "on the grounds." He asked the class to appreciate the administration's position: "As I see it the main thing for all of us to do is not to give an exaggerated importance to a matter which is not of such vital importance after all." He assured the chairman of the special committee of the junior class that the administration had the broad interests of the student body at heart and was always open to "suggestions from students as to how to make their lives more pleasant and their stay here in every way more helpful both to themselves and to their fellows."<sup>12</sup>

If, up until that time, there had been any question about the conservative board of trustees heavily influencing the social mores of the university, the events that followed dispelled all doubt. Few, acting on Wannamaker's letter to the junior class, appointed three Methodist preachers to a committee to study the situation.<sup>13</sup> They were not enthralled by the virtues of permissiveness. The Reverend Mr. M. T. Plyler, editor of the North Carolina Christian Advocate, wrote to Few of "a spirit of worldliness at Duke that runs counter to the things for which the college stood for more than half a century."<sup>14</sup> The Reverend Dr. W. A. Stanbury of the prestigious Edenton Street Methodist Church in Raleigh, wrote "that it was his constant prayer that the wisdom of God guide in all things,"<sup>15</sup> while the Reverend Dr. W. W. Peele, trustee and pastor of prestigious Trinity Methodist Church in Durham focused on the impropriety of newspaper publicity:





A growing margin of money to be used by a growing multitude in its margin of leisure makes the problem of the social life of our people one of tremendous concern. I am very sorry that publicity is being given to things that have no place in the papers. The column of a newspaper is no place to settle questions of this sort.<sup>16</sup>

Preachers other than those appointed to the committee felt compelled to speak about the dire results of student dances. Their concerns, voiced in repeated letters to Few, forced the president to write many calming letters in reply:

A hard and sad part of my professional life has been the constant effort I have had to make in order to convince important people in this country (think of it!) that a college may be definitely committed to the Church of Jesus Christ, and yet be patient, tolerant, keep an open mind for all truth and not, first or last, become the victim of those gusts of unwisdom which inevitably arise from time to time in all democracies.

Few, in this letter to the Reverend Mr. H. M. North, addressed a subject of more importance than dancing--the influence he had exercised with the Dukes to direct their beneficence toward a religious school determined to keep religion and education equally important. He explained what to him were the far-reaching implications of the furor:



If . . . [it] is merely sporadic and representative of local idiosyncrasies, then it is not significant; but, if it should be symptomatic of a more general state of mind, then it would be the first clear indication that in going as far as he did finally consent to go Mr. Duke may have made a monumental blunder and, in advising him to take the course he did take, I may have made the mistake of the ages. That is why this episode, seemingly very innocent, strikes terror to my soul highly sensitized as it is by the acute responsibilities that I must bear.<sup>17</sup>

The junior class, according to a member, danced without approval in the second-floor ballroom of the Union Building on East Campus.

More than dancing on the campus was forbidden. Students attacked the policy of keeping closed on Sunday swimming pools, tennis courts, and fields for other sports in February 1934 during the so-called student rebellion. Their criticism, however, brought about only limited change.<sup>18</sup> In the Report of the Committee for Investigation and Recommendation on Student Affairs, March 8, 1934, the grievance on campus recreation was answered by W. E. Whitford, assistant director in the Business Division, in a letter to Flowers: "The practice of unorganized athletic activities on the campus on Sunday afternoon would be a change in the tradition of Trinity College and would add to the maintenance cost of recreational facilities."<sup>19</sup>



The administration was not indifferent to the matter of social programs for students. In an effort to develop a social program it hired J. Foster Barnes and his wife in September 1927, he as director of social and religious activities and director of the men's glee club, and she as a hostess. In the fall of 1928 he presented to Soper an outline of suggested social programs for the beginning school year. The activities included dances, but there is no evidence that the administration had passed a ruling of approval. His other suggestions were motion pictures, athletic games, fraternity socials, literary society meetings, Y.M.C.A. meetings, glee club rehearsals, bridge parties (with a question mark after that item), weekly sings in the Union, and checker and chess games.<sup>20</sup>

Such was the social climate into which Ernest Seeman introduced the Explorers' Club in the mid-1920s.<sup>21</sup> (Appendix A) Some of his memories understandably are inaccurate--Janet Earl and Johnny Long were freshmen in the fall of 1931 and so could not have been on the earlier hikes; the steaks which Seeman recalled are mentioned in the recollection of other hikers as sandwiches in brown bags. The descriptions of the group's enjoyment of the outdoors and the pleasant atmosphere created by association of students, staff, faculty and visitors are accurate, however, and can be confirmed today by any person who was privileged to be an explorer during those years. There were always visitors but the "regulars" like Seeman, Dean Alice Baldwin, Dean Justin Miller, Ann Gardiner of the Nursing School,





and J. B. and Louisa Rhine from psychology, to name a few, formed the nucleus of faculty and staff that created an atmosphere where friendships between them and students were made and grew. The club was unique on the Duke campus. Without formal membership, without organization, with holdings of only two battered coffee pots, it remains in the memory of explorers.

The regulars brought visitors. Regular hiker William Perlzweig, biochemist from the Duke Medical School, brought Dr. Walter Kempner on his first Sunday in the United States, long before he became famous as the originator of the rice diet. A congratulatory letter of November 13, 1931, from Seeman to Frank Porter Graham on his installation as president of the University of North Carolina carried a hand-written note at the end: "Perhaps you and Mrs. Graham can come over some Sunday and spend the day with some of our most interesting Duke people at my cabin in the country? Or maybe if I send you several invitations to our socializing club (The Explorers) you will be able to come to one of these meetings sometime."<sup>22</sup> There is no evidence that Graham accepted Seeman's invitation, but other distinguished persons came. Dean Justin Miller invited Count Carlo Sforza, Italy's diplomat and former minister of foreign affairs. When that World War I hero made a month-long visit to Duke in February 1933 to lecture under the sponsorship of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace,<sup>23</sup> he hiked several times. A few student explorers still remember conversations with the personable count



who talked of his teen-age children who were in Brussels and how he missed them when he made long lecture tours.

Seeman particularly enjoyed the members of the Psychology Department who began arriving in the fall of 1927. They were led by William McDougall who came from Harvard, where since 1920 he had occupied the chair of professor of psychology made famous by William James. McDougall and his wife, Helge Lundholm (Abnormal Psychology) and his wife, and J. B. Rhine (Experimental Psychology) and his wife often joined the hikes. Donald K. Adams (Animal Psychology) and Karl Zener (Gestalt psychologist) completed the department and in them Seeman, with his interest in all human behavior, found friends and colleagues. In 1932 that department was instrumental in establishing an international journal, Character and Personality (later changed to the Journal of Psychology), with Ernest Seeman as associate editor.

The Explorers' Club gave Seeman the opportunity to combine the most important interests in his life--the love of out-of-doors, contacts with young people, and meeting the disparate group of interesting and successful people he so admired and enjoyed. Foremost among the latter would certainly be McDougall. Not only was his area of expertise in human behavior the one that absorbed Seeman's interest but he was a psychologist of international reputation. Doubtless Seeman knew of this reputation but it is unlikely that he knew more than the public image. Few and McDougall had exchanged letters in 1926, with Few inquiring if some young professor in the Harvard





Department of Psychology would be interested in coming to Duke. After several exchanges which did not culminate in a recommendation, McDougall suggested that he be considered a candidate; even though at fifty-four years of age he did not qualify as young, he more than qualified in other areas.

McDougall wrote Few that he was not happy at Harvard and would be interested in considering a change. Few was attending the three-week session of the General Conference of the Methodist Church in Memphis and asked Soper to make inquiries among his acquaintances in schools in the Boston area as to the appropriateness of Duke as a place for McDougall. Soper's correspondents were consistent in evaluating the scholarly reputation of the psychologist in social and purposive fields, but other comments indicated that at Harvard, McDougall had become both professionally and personally a controversial figure.<sup>24</sup> These were the circumstances that allowed Duke to acquire an internationally known authority as head of its new Department of Psychology.

Seeman admired McDougall who became both friend and mentor and remained so until Seeman's departure from Duke. In a letter to President Graham of the University of North Carolina on August 1934, Seeman, when his departure was imminent, wrote: "All my scientific work on psychology, child guidance, etc., has got a good hand in England but never even a word of encouragement here at Duke, (except, of course, from Dr. McDougall who's a prince of a man and knows that from hokum)".<sup>25</sup> The mutual admiration was a



source of much pleasure to Seeman, but may have given a false sense of knowledge and achievement to a man who was informed far beyond what would be expected in one with little formal education. . He was obviously bright, talented, self-taught by wide reading on many subjects, and intensely interested in human behavior and the vocational guidance of young people, but he still remained a person with less than a high school education, set in a community where scholarly work was judged on the basis of formal higher education and academic achievements.

The psychologist and Seeman shared an interest in early vocational guidance. Even though during his years at the press, Seeman published numerous articles on other subjects,<sup>26</sup> most of his writings were about the subject that had occupied his thinking for many years--the theory that vocational misfits are largely preventable if the talents and mental predilections of individuals are diagnosed at the beginning of their educational careers instead of at the end. Reference has been made to a manuscript he submitted for publication to George Lawrence Andrews, agent, early in his tenure at the Duke Press, where the image of the square peg in the round hole occurred. The letter to President Graham in 1931 (note 22) was written on a letterhead which had a stylized cursive "Ernest Seeman" above a "Consultant in Personality" and a logo consisting of a circle one quarter inch in diameter enclosing a black square.

In the midst of the vicissitudes of book publishing and administrative trials, Seeman never forgot his plans and



experiments regarding the theory that vocational misfits can be prevented. On December 31, 1928, James A. Thomas, whose book the press had just published, wrote to Flowers that Seeman had confided in him, and he felt that Duke or any other educational institution would find the plans for analyzing students' interests to be of value. Thomas added:

I happen to know that Mr. Thomas Edison granted Mr. Seeman an interview about the matter and is interested and contributed several ideas. My feeling is that Mr. Seeman should be encouraged to do some creative work, and I hope you will permit me to suggest that you speak to him yourself at some particular time about it with a view to his making further investigation.<sup>27</sup>

Flowers responded that he knew something of what Seeman had in mind and would be glad to encourage him and to cooperate with him.<sup>28</sup>

Seeman wrote to Flowers on January 4, 1929, outlining "confidentially" the gist of his plans and asked Flowers to send him half a dozen students for analysis, hoping the university in time would get around to inaugurating a Department of Vocational Guidance.<sup>29</sup> Seeman referred to a composite system of character analysis and vocational counseling which, in collaboration with Edison, Louise Rice (the world's leading hand-writing expert) and Katherine Blackford (criminologist and vocational expert), he had worked out. Seeman stated that the system was already proving very accurate in its results.<sup>30</sup>





Seeman was not alone in his interest even though the Duke administration was doing nothing toward vocational guidance. In January 1926, Few was asked to introduce a discussion at Hendrix College, Conway, Arkansas, on "What is my College Doing in the Way of Life Work or Vocational Guidance?" He also was asked to appoint one or two men from any institute in the church to follow in a discussion of the question of a practical program for vocational guidance in college. Few's secretary answered that he had asked her to acknowledge the letter and he would "try to do as you requested."<sup>31</sup>

A general interest in vocational guidance for college students surfaced in 1931, three years after Flowers had indicated to Thomas that the university supported Seeman's interest in vocational guidance. Frank Graham of the University of North Carolina, speaking for a committee for Life Guidance Service of the Y.M.C.A. asked Few to send a representative to a conference at Blue Ridge in the North Carolina mountains. The general theme of the meeting was the vocational choice and plans of students, with hopes that all faculty members of southern schools would become interested in the subject.<sup>32</sup>

Despite his interest, apparently Seeman was not considered a suitable representative. Instead, Few selected Duke chemistry professor Robert N. Wilson, recognized locally for his outstanding work with a Boy Scout troop sponsored by Duke Memorial Church, to which Few belonged. After the conference Wilson reported:



The value of the conference . . . was not so much the giving of vocational guidance to 200 student leaders in southern states as the fact that the whole question of vocational counselling has been definitely called to the attention of some 25 or 30 institutions in the south and the contagion is beginning to spread.<sup>33</sup>

Wilson's enthusiasm was not sufficiently contagious to cause the university to act, in part because the conference came at a time when, for reasons of economy, new programs had been held in abeyance. By 1935 Duke still offered no planned vocational guidance for all students. Answering a letter from the director of the National Occupation Conference, the secretary of Duke's appointments office explained that a few courses in guidance are offered and "a faculty representative from each department is chosen or appointed and students are invited to talk with him about their problems, and of course with their own teachers also." The secretary said that the responsibility of the appointments office was to assist in trying to place graduates in teaching positions and in business.<sup>34</sup>

There is no evidence that anyone in the administration seriously considered Seeman's plans for a vocational guidance department, but the university's lack of interest did not deter Seeman from continuing to write and publish concerning his theory. In Publishers' Weekly of October 25, 1930, appeared his article on "Books as 'Vigoro' for Genius," and under Seeman's name is "Consultant in Personality and Manager of the Duke





Press." The title indicated the regard, almost to the point of obsession, with which the author viewed books. He stated: "For the richness or the meagerness of ideas taken into the plastic human brain-cells between the ages of six months and sixteen years will invariably determine their breadth or brilliance for life." He listed books that he thought suitable for the developing child, a library of one hundred by age seven and three hundred worthwhile books by twelve. He was sympathetic with parents who needed help with selecting the volumes. He suggested that book sellers help by emphasizing to parents that individual libraries are an educational necessity for children and, by selecting for sale the right groups of books for children of specific ages, the book sellers could, through letters and personal calls, interest parents in the purchase of these books. When installment payment was still to come as a household word, Seeman suggested that the book sellers work out a variety of affordable plans for payment. All of this was to be done to broaden a particular child's interests and outlook. He ended with what he called a great psychological truth:

Five hundred dollars invested in the right kind of books for a boy or girl before the age of twelve is worth five thousand so invested for the rest of his or her life. For above every other kind of intellectual food yet discovered, books contain the most subtle and the most powerful psychic ingredients for the nourishment of personality, character and genius.<sup>35</sup>



In the same year, Psychology published a Seeman article entitled, "What Does your Boy Want to Be?" Seeman presented a schedule of the mental development that could be expected in children at certain ages, beginning at six months and continuing until age fifteen. He advised techniques for parents to use in order to encourage the development of a growing child in exploring, observing, drawing and experimenting. Again he emphasized reading and the five-hundred dollar library acquired by the time a child reached twelve.<sup>36</sup>

In a 1933 article in The Modern Psychologist, "Young Men in Earnest," he called for vocational guidance coupled with psychological laboratories and the popularization of a positive public attitude toward mental health.<sup>37</sup> In an article published in Character and Personality, the Duke psychology journal, in 1934, Seeman offered statistical comparison with charts and illustrations of the drawing-development of one hundred young children in Shanghai and Soochow, China, with those of one hundred in Durham, in support of his thesis that while the children's environments may differ because of race, culture or education, the general route of their artistic development was as fundamental in its steps as was learning to walk or talk.<sup>38</sup>

All of Seeman's articles were grounded in a positive, optimistic viewpoint. A final one, however, written in Seeman's final months at Duke, revealed his growing criticism of all conservative established educational philosophies and his increasing disillusionment with the intellectual restraints that



he felt permeated the university. The article, "The Fetishes We Worship," published in The Forum and Century, described the queer, senseless "rules laid down by forgotten generations" but still holding back the present generation. He cited capitalism that rewards the few and enslaves the thousands who produce the goods and gold. He deplored the concept of profit that must be honored no matter if hordes of citizens of the world perish while other persons destroy the overproduction of grain and other crops. Seeman struck a blow at religion for its inconsistency, with avowed Christians manufacturing cannon and gunpowder and devising machines to slaughter entire cities. He criticized education for making an issue out of the minutiae of punctuation while ignoring general concepts of wisdom. He blamed advertising for creating a market and furnishing a population with drugs and habit-forming drinks, with foods preserved by poisons, and with useless medicines that exploit the ignorant and sick. Seeman ended with another propounding of his theory that all the money spent on destruction of bodies and minds of young people would be more wisely spent on the nurture and training of youth. He had a word of praise for the New Deal: "Fine"; but he felt that people should also throw overboard the nonsensical rules by which they had been trying to play the game. "Isn't it about time that we abandoned the Noah's Ark system?"<sup>39</sup>





#### IV. Mutual Discontent

With the reorganization of the press accomplished, although not exactly in accord with his suggestions, Seeman settled into his duties. He promoted the press by displaying the full 32-volume set of "our press wares" in the President's office and by exhibiting them in Dwire's public relations office. He also managed exhibitions in both college stores on the Woman's College campus and on the Men's College campus. In a letter to Few, explaining some problems with advertising a professor's book, he apologized for the length of the letter: "but I merely wish to reassure you that the press has its feet on the ground and is making all possible progress considering the amount of funds entrusted to its care."<sup>1</sup> The press was then engaged in organizing two journals, Ecological Monographs, in 1931, sponsored by zoologist A. S. Pearse, and Character and Personality, in 1932, promoted by psychologist William McDougall.

While the psychology journal was still in a formative stage, a letter from Seeman to Wilburt C. Davison, dean of the Medical School, presaged a problem that followed Seeman during all his years at Duke and one which he never seemed to recognize. He failed to understand or chose to ignore the hierarchy of positions that existed at Duke University and the limitations this automatically placed on him as manager of the press and associate editor of one journal. Then, as now, formal education



determines entry into and position in the academic ranks, and lack of it, no matter how intelligent, talented or self-educated one may be, presents an almost insuperable barrier to full-fledged admission. Seeman's insensitivity to this fact surfaced in a letter to Davison asking his financial support for Character and Personality in terms that would have been more suitable from an academician representing the journal. Seeman explained: McDougall "of your own organization" was one of the proposers and sponsors and would be a contributor as well as other workers in your department of psychology; the field of glandular research could be largely preempted by research workers in the medical area if Davison so desired, through Duke's control of the journal; Dean Miller of the law school endorsed the project as a valuable potential outlet for criminological research and joint studies of the law and psychology departments for the further advancement of reasonable legal practice. The journal was to be published in German as well as English, and would carry the published research of Duke men into a larger scientific circle.<sup>2</sup> Davison's terse note expressed restrained approval: "I agree with you that this new journal might be an excellent one but I do not see why Duke University should help pay for it."<sup>3</sup> The journal was begun with much acclaim, "New Publication at Duke is International in Scope," and survived despite the prevailing financial circumstances.<sup>4</sup> In a letter to McDougall during Seeman's last months at Duke, Few confirmed that problems arose when a manager of the press assumed editorial





responsibility. He wrote with characteristic restraint about what had often been a situation fraught with turmoil:

Mr. Seeman goes off duty October 15. I think it will be best for the manager of the press hereafter to give his whole attention to the business of the Press, leaving all editorships to be provided by the department of psychology, history, ecology, mathematics, etc. The business of the press is too complicated for it to pass into the hands of a man who is interested in one publication alone. I know, however, that you fully understand this already.<sup>5</sup>

Ecological Monographs was as successful as the psychology journal and presented Seeman a second opportunity to criticize the administration as he had when he and Soper sponsored the peace rally in 1928. This time, however, Seeman was assertive in suggesting that endowment trustees were improperly determining the philosophical policies of the university.

In the case of the Ecological Monographs, the trustees dared to meddle with scientific research and--in the case of Norman Thomas's speaking engagement on the Duke Campus--with academic freedom. Their position in both incidents made it plain that they wanted to have a hand in all aspects of university policy, including matters unrelated to their training and experience in business and finance. Few lamented to Perkins the lack of agreement even in the latter areas, a lack centering around the method of securing increased funds for the university. Few was



in favor of trying to get additional endowment while the trustees, understandably, wanted to increase tuition.<sup>6</sup>

Apparently the subject had been discussed many times but Few maintained his attitude of diplomacy and his wish to acquiesce to the board if at all possible: "The position you take is sound, though some variation in details may be necessary; and we will cooperate to the fullest. We are anxious to go forward as rapidly as we can." Perkins answered Few in slang terms: "On our side we feel that we have had it from the University. In addition, we think that the University ought to feel it has had it from us." According to Few, the "great diversion" between the two pointed up Few's hope that Duke would not "drag indefinitely, just as Cornell dragged for twenty or thirty years until a new generation came with reinforcements." He wanted increased endowment that would go hand in hand with academic prestige. Perkins agreed with Few about the indenture's aim to "attain and maintain a place of real leadership in the educational world," but the tone of his letter emphasized pragmatic methods which lacked sensitivity to the subtle aspect of education, of which Few was acutely aware.<sup>7</sup> Further, the attitude of Perkins and Allen placed Few in the compromising position of having to justify the academicians to the businessmen and vice versa. The trustees were attacking the basic reason for which universities are built--to teach students to think for themselves, not to indoctrinate them. The former can be done only if students are introduced to many ideas and points of view presented by teachers



and scholars who are allowed a reasonable freedom of opinion in all questions, and who respect dissenting opinions. Control of money is a powerful weapon, and Few was placed in the delicate position of balancing his role of administrator against that of academician, roles that drained the energy of a man plagued with financial uncertainties, personal problems and frail health.

An understanding of these circumstances is important to a fair evaluation of his administration. This understanding is especially true with respect to those incidents--such as the Seeman case--where he felt compelled to dismiss those who were not contributing to the best interests of the university, or more personally, were causing difficulties that drained his energy and vitality and kept him from pursuing his main intent--to carry out the terms of the Duke Indenture.

The accusation of meddling with scientific research resulted from an article in Ecological Monographs appearing in July, 1931, "An Ecological Study of the Tobacco Beetle with Special Reference to its Life History and Control" by Thomas E. Powell.<sup>8</sup> Powell, while on a Duke fellowship established by Liggett and Myers Tobacco Co., had conducted research that indicated that, of two fumigants for the tobacco beetle, HCN made by the American Cyanamid Company and ethylene oxide made by Union Carbide Company, ethylene was the more effective. Perkins wrote Few that William Bell, an original trustee of the endowment, was the president of American Cyanamid and that both Perkins and Allen were directors and, therefore, very interested in the company.<sup>9</sup>





He related that William Moore of the American Cyanamid sales force had complained that Powell's article reported just the reverse of what his research indicated. Moore had travelled to Duke to see Pearse and Powell who, he said, had admitted the errors but had published no correction. Perkins asked Few to see that some retraction be published since research unfavorable to his company done at Duke University was doing irreparable harm to his company. At Few's recommendation, Paul Gross, chairman of the Duke Chemistry Department, and in charge of the Liggett and Myers industrial research fellowships, sent a correction of the paper's errors to the editor of Science and asked Pearse to run a correction in Ecological Monographs.<sup>10</sup> That correction did not satisfy Moore, however, and he wrote his own correction which Perkins sent to Few.<sup>11</sup> Even though Seeman had already sent 500 of the original corrections to Perkins, the press printed 500 copies of the correction edited by Moore, which were sent to Perkins by Pearse. Pearse instructed Seeman to handle it like any routine business connected with the Duke University Press and to write Perkins a "nice little letter" saying "we were glad to cooperate with him at any time." Pearse commented: "Of course we are glad to do anything we can to accomodate Few and Perkins. William Moore, however, who has been agitating this matter, is a sort of reptile. I would therefore like to send these reprints to Perkins rather than to him."<sup>12</sup>

Seeman was involved in the American Cyanamid Company matter but it is unlikely that he knew of the research arrangement



between Gross and the Liggett and Myers Tobacco Company. That research aimed at finding ways to control some of the plant diseases to which tobacco was subject, in particular, blue mold. The research directive showed that Gross, his research department, and the administration had learned from the American Cyanamid experience. It stipulated that "this amount [\$12,000] is to be expended by the officers of the University in such manner as may seem best to them for the best interests of the tobacco industry."<sup>13</sup> W. W. Flowers, vice-president of Liggett and Myers Company of New York, wrote Gross, making it plain that the company did not want any resulting publication to carry its name or an announcement about the company's contribution to supporting the research.<sup>14</sup> Gross, acting in the absence of Few, forwarded the correspondence to Robert L. Flowers, brother of W. W.<sup>15</sup>

There is no evidence during Seeman's nine years at Duke that he was publicly involved in any of the situations that he so severely criticized in The New Republic article, "Duke: But Not Doris," two years after leaving.<sup>16</sup> In addition to criticizing the hypocrisy he perceived in the peace rally and the American Cyanamid incidents, when the university's policy was determined by the financial interests of the Duke Endowment investments and its trustees rather than by ethical and educational principles, he also took aim at the lack of academic freedom for both students and faculty.





The incident he criticized was highly visible since it involved the visit of Socialist Norman Thomas to the campus.<sup>17</sup> It caused Few much anguish. If he considered grueling the confrontation about the dancing regulation that had offended the university trustees and N.C. Methodist preachers, armed only with rhetoric and ill will, he now knew that was a minor skirmish compared to the full-bodied attack launched by the Duke Endowment trustees, armed with the heavier ammunition of their right ultimately to withhold endowment funds. At the time Thomas appeared at Duke, Few was in Atlanta, but he was hardly home before a barrage of criticism began from the media, the alumni, and, of prime importance, the Duke Endowment trustees. Perkins was the first, in a curt note speaking for Allen and himself,<sup>18</sup> with which he enclosed a copy of a reprint from the Southern Textile Bulletin.<sup>19</sup> Few's explanation was multiple: that he had been out of town at the time; that Norman Thomas had been invited to speak to a discussion group composed of a small number of teachers and a large number of students; that the organization was promoted principally by McDougall in the model of such discussion groups long known at Oxford and Cambridge; and that, had he been on campus, it was unlikely he would have protested, judging it best to let Thomas quietly have his say. Few's lengthy letter stated that it was the business of Duke University to hear both sides of all questions that are fairly debatable and to choose faculty with particular care in such highly inflammable subjects as government, economics, and sociology, psychology and



philosophy, and to leave them with a free hand to find and proclaim the truth as they saw it. He struck a nerve in the businessmen when he wrote that he wanted to see built up in the South a highly industrialized civilization in which not "stark materialism" but the things of the mind and the spirit would prevail, where everyone connected with the university had an open mind and a willingness to give a fair hearing to every well-meaning man, not allowing "the saints about Charlotte or elsewhere to vex our spirits unduly."<sup>20</sup>

This did not sit well with Perkins and Allen. They replied that for Few to ignore the socialist teachings of Thomas, including his advocacy of free love and marriage of black and white, was to abdicate his responsibility to the boys and girls whose parents had committed them to his care at a most impressionable age. In order to make the gravest charge that he could make, Perkins quoted Thomas's speech:

But let me assure you I am a Socialist. I believe that we shall not have plenty, peace and freedom in the world until we have brought about public ownership and democratic management of land, natural resources and the principal means of production and distribution. I want to see an end of private property for power and the ownership and operation for profit of things necessary to our common life out of which arise the waste, the tyranny, and the wars of our time.



He asked Few to identify the "stark materialism" which he feared, because, if by "stark materialism" he meant "capitalism," he should remember that the great captains of industry--Rockefeller, Carnegie, Rosenwald and Wanamaker--were to be praised not only for their philanthropies but for the creation of a business system without peer in the world. He concluded by saying that the entrepreneurs were as "God-created as farmers and laborers and unselfish when compared to Thomas and his ilk who sought to array class against class and who have no real place among wholesome citizens."<sup>21</sup>

Few was "sorely discouraged" that his long-time friends had so misunderstood his position. He offered to come to New York to discuss three practical questions implicit in the correspondence: (1) Since the university had nothing to do with the invitation to Thomas, should he or the university's representative have refused to allow Thomas to speak in the campus building? (2) Is it the business of the university to protect its students from any except the orthodox views of economics and government, and particularly should students be forbidden to discuss those economic and governmental doctrines involved in what is known as Socialism? and (3) Should Few as president be expected to know the ultimate truth in all the great fields of human knowledge and be able to rule out questions not "fairly debatable?" Few recalled that he, Perkins and Allen had been on the same side of all public and political questions in the years they had known each other and that "we are probably not far apart in our





personal views, our recent letters to the contrary notwithstanding."<sup>22</sup>

Perkins and Allen were not taken by Few's optimism. They replied that they "rejoiced to know that you think we have misunderstood you but do not see that your numbered statements get us very far. Your (1) simply puts a premium on official ignorance and (2) and (3) simply run to theoretical extremes." Perkins quoted that J. B. Duke's purpose "as one of the principal objects of this trust" was to combine education, sane and practical, as opposed to dogmatic and theoretical, with religion, which is the greatest civilizing influence. And with that quote Perkins fired his strongest salvo:

He [Mr. Duke] gave the trustees of the Endowment authority to withhold from Duke University the payment of funds whenever "in the judgment of the trustees under this Indenture [it] be not operated in a manner calculated to achieve the results intended thereby." There would have been no point to Mr. Duke making this statement and giving his trustees this power if he had been of the opinion which you indicate is your opinion in your statements (2) and (3).<sup>23</sup>

Few did not go to New York as he had planned, possibly to show that the threat of withdrawal of endowment funds did not intimidate him, or as he stated, because he had local obligations that made it unwise for him to be away.<sup>24</sup>



The subject of Norman Thomas and his speeches at Duke continued to be a sore point with the endowment trustees. Before the 1932 presidential election, Allen was pained "because a considerable number of the best men at Duke" signed a petition to have the Socialist Party on the ballot, a position with which Few agreed.<sup>25</sup> Two years after the original confrontation Allen inquired of Few about a story in the Durham Sun stating that Thomas would make an address sponsored by the School of Religion, and asked for a copy of the speech and the occasion for his making it.<sup>26</sup> Again Few told him that Thomas was invited by a few older students in the School of Religion, and after three requests for a hall where he could speak had been denied, Thomas spoke in what the students called an "Open Forum" session. Few added that he had "let out three more young men" who seemed to the administration more apt to make trouble than to render larger service. He also defended Duke English Professor Newman Ivy White, despite his Socialist Party affiliations, saying that White's "flirtation with political notoriety" was his last and that for the time being he had separated himself from the party and that the relief work he was doing in Durham was purely humanitarian. Few even offered to request faculty members to keep themselves free from compromising political entanglements, a position he thought would be unwise, but which he would take if Allen and Perkins thought he should.<sup>27</sup>

The endowment trustees were not finished with the subject of Thomas. When Allen read in a Greensboro paper that White was an





officer in the N.C. Socialist Party which advocated state ownership of key industries, the banking system and public utilities, higher corporation taxes, and a capital levy, he wrote to Few:

I regret exceedingly to find that your expectations [that White would disassociate himself from the Socialist Party] did not materialize. It would be utterly impossible for me to bring myself to a position where I would be willing to accept employment from and undertake service for any institution whose income was derived to such a large extent, as is that of Duke University, from a source or sources (such as, for instance, Duke Power Company) that I was at the same time endeavoring to undermine or destroy. It is beyond me to appreciate that any right thinking man could do so.

It is equally impossible for me, speaking now as an individual trustee of Duke University, to refrain from saying to you that I cannot favor the continued employment by that institution of anybody when it becomes evident that their activities are clearly directed toward crippling or destroying of the things conducive to the best interests of that university.<sup>28</sup>

Few's appreciation for the Duke family, especially James B. Duke, approached reverence,<sup>29</sup> and was evident in his dedication to fulfilling their wishes. The lofty aims of the indenture were



commendable, but the daily problems which he confronted in carrying out those aims were enormous. Only those who held Few's confidence realized the magnitude of his problems, not the least of which was the simple fact that there was not enough money in the endowment to execute Duke's plan. Two years after the initial gift, Few wrote to W. S. Rankin, the original trustee in charge of the bequests to hospitals and medical schools:

I am frankly worried. It was just as clear to me the day Mr. Duke died as it is now that we do not have either in hand or in sight sufficient resources to develop the other departments in the University as Mr. Duke expected us to develop them and also support the sort of medical school and hospital that the public expects of us and that all of us want to see here. I advised intimately with you when the whole great matter of medical school and hospitals was wavering in the balance and when I was taking staggering risks for them. I therefore venture again to speak with you in the same intimate way. I do not know just what any of us can do about it except for all of us first to put our minds on it. My faith has always been that what ought to be done can be done. But before a situation can be cured it must first be realized.<sup>30</sup>

Few was equally concerned later when he wrote to Perkins in more detail: "But the simple fact is, without increased endowment



we cannot possibly build a great university." He recalled the early days of the endowment:

. . . in the light of later developments there is little doubt that if in the winter of 1925 we could have had matters of Board relations and control of the University as they are now we would have had solid additions to the endowment of our Medical School. And if we had at the same time realized as clearly as we now realize our ever-growing need of endowment, that fact might have influenced the mind of Mr. B. N. Duke to courses of action more apt to do permanent good and more creditable to his memory, and might have been influential in other important ways. At any rate we would feel that we had done our best; and for one I do not now feel that way. . . .

If in the winter of 1925 all arrangements concerning our control had been firmly made and had been understood by all and we could have started with an initial endowment of \$40,000,000 [the endowment to Duke University was 32% of the annual income of \$40,000,000], it still would have been a giant task to build a great endowed university in the Old South and keep the people abreast of it all. But as it is I do not doubt we will make the grade without too much delay. If it is a great task it is also an inspiring one and the lot of us all is a happy one in that we are





at the birth of a great university that will shape and direct the lives of unnumbered people.<sup>31</sup>

Few developed the School of Religion first, then the Medical School, followed by the Law School. The Medical School was able to receive from the Rockefeller Foundation through the General Education Board an appropriation of \$300,000 distributed over a period of five years, but requests for funds from other foundations yielded nothing.<sup>32</sup>

The weakening economy, added to the original short-fall, necessitated severe cutbacks in all programs of the university, an action Few deferred as long as possible. Through 1931-32 there were no reductions in salaries or personnel. By 1932-1933 reduction in both areas were proposed. Allen informed Few of the elimination of or reduction in dividends and interest in securities, and of the possibility that even further reductions in the budget would be necessary for the next term.<sup>33</sup> Few's responses were well planned: to set up no new chairs; to fill no vacancy except where size of classes made it necessary; to make no advances in salary; to decrease funds for laboratories and libraries; to eliminate research grants; to defer indefinitely leaves of absence; to discontinue travel expenses; and to reduce admissions to the medical school since teaching costs per student were very high.<sup>34</sup>

Although the financial health of the university rightfully was Few's first priority, the problems of individual faculty members and hard-pressed students followed closely. Across



Few's desk came hundreds of letters from persons seeking appointments to the Duke faculty--new Ph.D.s, qualified professors released by other universities for lack of funds to pay salaries. There were, in addition, many letters of recommendation from Few's many friends and acquaintances in behalf of their family and friends. He also received pleas from active and retired preachers and congregations, hoping to share in the funds that Duke had designated for distribution in those areas. Letters even came from total strangers who wrote out of the despair of poverty never before experienced, hoping in some miraculous way to benefit from Duke's philanthropy. Few answered most of them with patience and compassion. It was a testing experience. For instance, an eleven-year old girl who "had read in the News and Observer where Mr. Duke gave so much money to aged ministers pleaded: "Please give me a little bit of money for Christmas. . . . My mother is dead and Daddy is crippled. I have five little brothers younger than I am. Daddy has not had any work in over a year. Please help me a little. Please do. Wishing you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. A little friend."<sup>35</sup> Particularly poignant were the notes from early graduates of Trinity College and from destitute widows of professors from those early days. In answering requests for help he was able to offer words of cheer and optimism while denying the requests.

Admidst these strains, Few's frequent letters to his five sons away at school, camp, or vacation are typically fatherly





letters to young children, filled with minutiae, pleas for better grades, and reports of the win-loss record of Duke's athletic teams.<sup>36</sup> So large a growing family was a tremendous financial drain, particularly as the economy worsened in the early 1930s.<sup>37</sup> In addition he carried the financial responsibility for his sister and brother while he attempted to prevent foreclosure proceedings against land and buildings in his father's South Carolina estate. He was constantly confronted with overdue bills, mortgage payments, interest, insurance, tax payments and the consequent penalties, and threats of litigation and bankruptcy. The closing of the banks in 1932 added to these difficulties. An additional problem was his wife's tradings in real estate, often unknown to him, but causing for him both embarrassment and more financial difficulties. He wrote to intimates that as a man concerned with matters of the mind and spirit he disliked intensely the financial burdens thrust upon him.

Few was not a robust man, and his arduous work schedule must have contributed to his frequent respiratory infections. In the formative days of the university, he made many grueling overnight train trips to New York to interview professors or confer with endowment officials. He was in great demand as a speaker and felt obliged to attend dozens of Methodist business meetings and worship services. He was closely involved in the Junaluska Assembly of the Methodist Church, near Asheville, where Duke held summer school. He was elected president of the Southern



Association of Schools and Colleges in 1932 and for a time was president of the General Board of Lay Activities of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South.

With his heavy schedule of meetings and speeches, his ever-present financial problems and his bouts with illness, he managed most of the time to maintain his quiet manner. There are few passages in his correspondence showing anger. His rare contacts with Ernest Seeman appeared to have been pleasant. In 1931 Few called Seeman "an expert on handwriting."<sup>38</sup> After he had analyzed some handwriting specimens from "three reformed adult illiterates," Seeman returned them to Few with psychological sketches on each.<sup>39</sup> An article Seeman wrote praising the achievements of Negroes in the fields of music, art, literature and science<sup>40</sup> attracted Few and he called it to the attention of several Negro friends.<sup>41</sup>

But friction remained a constant at the press. Flowers wrote to Rippy:

I take it for granted that Ernest Seeman must have written to you, and from your letter I infer that he must not have written what he was requested to write. I find that he frequently gets things mixed up. He is not here now and I cannot find out just what he wrote.<sup>42</sup>

The next year Seeman attempted to clear up a problem that had existed for Garland Greever, whose unpublished manuscript the press had held for three years. Seeman wrote:



With all good will to Dr. Boyd, I may say that it is nothing unusual for him to make rash promises for our press to publish materials; but I assure you that in these promises he is acting without any jurisdiction whatever.<sup>43</sup>

Most of Seeman's personal and business contacts were in a precarious condition. His relationship with Pearse, however, remained cordial, and Ecological Monographs was able to continue despite the economy.<sup>44</sup> Seeman reported to Flowers in late 1931, "Our books are moving pretty well, despite the depression and absence of any advertising except the simplest and most inexpensive outlets,"<sup>45</sup> but the next year Flowers found the situation "very discouraging due to the fact that few books had been sold and that the magazines were losing a great deal of money."<sup>46</sup> That trend continued.

In an atmosphere of deepening economic depression and severe cutbacks on all sides, Seeman did not appear surprised at the letter from Dwire informing him of his dismissal from the press because of financial reasons. But he did try to hold on to his position on new terms. He explained that by a startling coincidence a man who owed him money that he had no hopes of collecting was now willing to pay it off and the extra income would allow Seeman to make a definite proposal: to hold his position at status quo, to accept the blanket cut in salary given all personnel, and to underwrite personally the salary for the employee already appointed to take his place so that the





administration would not incur any expense in reinstating him.<sup>47</sup> There is no record of Dwire's reaction to Seeman's proposal. The events that followed indicate that the administration gave Seeman the year's notice normally granted faculty members.

Seeman's subsequent article, "Duke: But Not Doris" recounted many points of disagreement between himself and the Duke administration, but if, prior to September 1933, he indulged in activities disloyal to the university, they were private.<sup>48</sup> In his taped recollections he recalled that Few once joined an Explorers' Club hike, ostensibly for enjoyment but actually hoping to find some evidence of "radical activity."<sup>49</sup> He also remembered breakfasts at his home on Seeman Street with McDougall and Miller, where they talked of how wonderful the university would be if only Miller were the president, but these events are recorded only in Seeman's memory and the tapes.<sup>50</sup>

Seeman, despite his sometime dissatisfaction, still saw Duke as "a most congenial opportunity for the use of my humble talents."<sup>51</sup> Few, for his part, wrote to Alex Sands, "we must more and more find or develop brilliant men of one kind and another even though we recognize beforehand that they will make all kinds of trouble for us by offending with venturesome thinking the minds of people that are not hospitable to new, fundamental ideas and have had little opportunity as yet to know much about the meaning and mission of a genuine university."<sup>52</sup> The press manager was beginning to "make all kinds of trouble by . . . offending with venturesome thinking the minds of people



that are not hospitable to new, fundamental ideas;" the president felt that his responsibility was to interpret the meaning and to carry out the mission of "a genuine university" in accordance with his knowledge and concepts. Philosophically there should have been no disagreement between Seeman and Few; in practice a different situation had emerged.





## V. The Iconoclast

Ernest's letter to Henry Dwire indicated that he thought his dismissal from the Duke Press was solely for economic reasons, and his efforts at conciliation were based on that assumption.<sup>1</sup> Up to that time, the Duke administration had shown no evidence that it suspected Seeman of disloyalty to the university in any area. Two months later, however, Seeman became publicly embroiled with the administration over an anonymous publication Justin Miller called "scurrilous."<sup>2</sup> The publication was "The Vision of King Paucus," a satire in which thinly disguised administration figures were portrayed as physically and mentally ridiculous, and the Duke campus was described as a playground for their frivolous activities.<sup>3</sup> (Appendix B) Miller sent William Perkins a copy of "Vision," saying that he thought the endowment trustees should be aware of an event on the campus that had "created a great deal of talk, provoked a great deal of feeling and had very serious significance as indication of a disorderly condition and an unruly situation generally." Through the years the administration had been the target of criticism, but it, and Few in particular, had not become inured to it. Answers by Few to letters of criticism gave conciliatory explanations,<sup>4</sup> but he was virtually helpless against such tirades as those in 1929 of North Carolinian Ben Dixon MacNeill, recently on the staff of the News and Observer,<sup>5</sup> or H. L. Mencken,<sup>6</sup> or Jonathan Daniels.<sup>7</sup> Closer to home hostility between the student bodies of Duke and



the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill became so intense that the two schools stopped announcing at their football games the scores when each played other rivals.<sup>8</sup>

The administration was aware that within the immediate university family there were dissidents. A year before "Vision," an anonymous letter to Wannamaker named faculty who were members of a "rump parliament" whose purpose was to "embarrass the administration and to control as many assets of the university as possible in the interest of the group." The letter named Boyd, Laprade, Gross and Baum as the nucleus of the group, which planned to get control of the faculty club and the local chapter of the AAUP. It intended to dominate most of the faculty bodies (library, councils, research committees, etc.) so as ultimately to replace Few with a president of their choosing. Despite carrying this brand of anonymity, the letter pointed out to the administration that obvious unrest and factionalism were growing on the campus.<sup>9</sup>

Like the writer of that letter, the author of "Vision" revealed such familiarity with happenings on the campus and the habits and idiosyncrasies of Few, Flowers, Wannamaker, Dwire and others, that he had to be in close contact with them. The focus of the investigation to find the lampoon's author turned to Ernest Seeman, known as a friend to students and advocate of free expression, because in the opinion of a "someone," the play seemed written in Seeman's style. He denied writing it or participating in its publication. In his Recollections he



recounted that Few promised that if, assuming he did not write the piece, he would divulge who did, "You'll never hear anything about it." Seeman answered, "I'll be hanged first."<sup>10</sup>

The reason behind his refusal to identify the author remains an enigma, and the author remained publicly unidentified until October 1979. With the publication of Seeman's novel, American Gold,<sup>11</sup> memories of him and "Vision" surfaced and Janet Earl, an undergraduate in 1933, identified herself as the author.<sup>12</sup> Before her revelation, she wrote, "Ernest Seeman did not write "Paucus" but he did tamper with it slightly. As far as I know he had always been literally truthful on that score."<sup>13</sup>

In an interview in October 1979, Earl related the events leading up to the brouhaha.<sup>14</sup> She was a member of the junior class of Duke's Woman's College, hiked with the Explorers' Club and was particularly appreciated by Seeman because she had written a prize-winning novel in high school and was interested in all facets of writing. In his office on Sunday mornings, she and Seeman often talked of their mutual impatience with Duke's constraints on students and its provincial attitude toward the academic freedom of faculty. Since she thought the administration was "oblivious to the grim realities of the times," Seeman suggested that she write a satire about the administration. "Vision" was the result and the repercussions of its publication were out of all proportion to her intention. She gave Seeman what she considered a rough draft, expecting him to return it for rewriting. She was surprised, several weeks later,





to receive from a publishing house in Pennsylvania, 300 copies of the work, only slightly edited. The youthful exuberance of the episode was shown by the way those copies were sent to members of the university community. With two friends she went to Raleigh, bought envelopes, rented a typewriter and found a woods "somewhere near Raleigh," where they addressed the envelopes, being careful to include in the addressees themselves, friends, Explorers, and faculty selected so that no suspicion would be cast on the senders.

The morning after the mailing, Earl went to the university post office very early, anxious to watch the recipients' faces when they opened that piece of mail. To her amazement the repercussions began. Suspicion was cast on her because of the misspelling of "dais," a mistake she had made in some earlier writing, a part of the story she remembered only vaguely. Rumor also connected Seeman with "Vision" because the envelopes were thought to have been addressed on the same typewriter with dropped "e" used to address Explorers' Club invitations. Earl felt that she was followed by suspicious strangers and had her mail opened. She was interrogated by several Woman's College staff members. Earl remembered distinctly that no person ever asked her the straightforward question: "Did you write 'The Vision of King Paucus?'" and she had no intention of volunteering that information. Instead, the interrogations foreboded dire consequences, some of them legal, if she did not confess.



She became so uncomfortable with the suspicious atmosphere that she consulted Leslie Craven, professor in the Duke Law School, who was also an explorer and long-time friend of Justin Miller. When she told him how frightened she was at what had begun as a spoof and a lark, she later recalled that Craven reported that the university was taking the matter very seriously, that it indeed had employed Pinkerton detectives--at great expense--to identify the perpetrator, and that one of his classes had been assigned to find out who wrote "Vision." He told her she had more brains and talent than she had judgment and advised her to do three things: never to come to see him again (he left Duke the following year); never to make any private contact with Ernest Seeman; and to leave Duke at the end of the school year (June 1934). Also he advised her not to reveal that she was the author of a work undermining the university because such a disclosure would make it difficult for her to get a job.

Earl followed Craven's advice, left Duke, and had no further contact with anyone there. Several years later she accidentally met Seeman in Chicago and there learned that he had been dismissed. When asked in 1979 if at any time in the intervening years she had considered revealing herself as the author and perhaps in some way responsible for Seeman's later fortune, she answered that Seeman was aware of her involvement, that he had sent "Vision" away to be printed, and consequently that he was a co-schemer in her actions. Still true to his interest in the great and famous, he introduced her at a subsequent meeting to





naturalist, explorer and writer William Beebe, with whom she made arrangements to do some writing on his next expedition, arrangements that did not materialize because of the war. He also introduced her to Richard Halliburton, another traveller, lecturer and writer.

Relations between Seeman and Earl remained cordial. Obviously he felt no resentment towards her for her part in the episode, and she felt in no way responsible for what happened to him later. With her family, she visited Seeman and his second wife, Elizabeth, several times during the 1960s when Earl's daughter attended Hollins College in Virginia, near Tumblin' Creek, Tennessee, where the Seemans settled in the early 1940s. In 1968 and 1969 Seeman made efforts through Earl and her daughter, then working at Doubleday Publishers, to get Tobacco Road (later American Gold) published at that house.<sup>15</sup>

Craven's advice produced visible consequences. The writing of "Vision" did influence Earl's later writing and career because she recalled that she was reluctant to put in writing material she might have used, and she felt that, had the episode been part of her vita, she would not have survived the scrutiny of Quaker Oats Company in the 1940s when she was hired to manage their house organ. Some years later Earl and her husband met Craven for dinner in New York. They enjoyed recalling their days at Duke, and Craven said that he told only two people of the incident, his colleague, Justin Miller [Seeman recalled in his Recollections that Miller was one of the people to whom he had



revealed the author of "Vision" at the time of the incident] and Herbert Hoover, while they were on a fishing trip. Craven reported, "Herbert Hoover laughed at the story."

Finally, in our interview, Earl explained that forty-five years later was the time "to set the record straight." She stated that she appreciated the fact that her two accomplices and this writer, who had typed the original manuscript of "Vision," had never violated her confidence. The writing of "The Vision of King Paucus" was Janet Earl's story, and she told it when she thought its time had come. Ernest Seeman in 1979 was too ill to be aware of the revelation but from it his wife Elizabeth and son Bill could learn the whole truth.

Seeman related his version of the "Vision" affair in his Recollections:

Two of the girls [in Explorers' Club] who were very bright suggested we write a--what do you call things where you make fun of people? A parody. So they appointed me to get it done and we took all kinds of secret measures and I had them printed in Baltimore. Had them mailed in Raleigh; a certain girl went down there and spent the afternoon in the hotel addressing them all, so they couldn't identify her in the post office. Nobody knew about that except a few people like Dean Miller; he knew about it. We were aiming to make him President, of course; he would have made a real president. He trained superior court executives.



Seeman's 89-year-old mind was understandably confused about the details. When asked if he went to Baltimore to carry the piece to the printer, Seeman replied:

No, I didn't need to. I knew somebody there, a printer; told him I wanted to get it out. "A Vision of King Paucus" is what it was called. When I first saw it, it came to the express office in a bundle and was delivered to me. Then they were released early one morning, mailed them in the post office. And oh, what a furor when all those parodies were turned loose and began to break around the campus. Some of them were selling for as high as five dollars apiece. And then somebody else started printing copies.<sup>16</sup>

Since Seeman denied writing "Vision" and refused to name its author, the finger of guilt continued to point at him,<sup>17</sup> a situation that, in view of his hostile attitude toward the university, made him vulnerable to more accusations. The student rebellion occurring three months after the publication of "Vision" created a widespread and overt crisis on the campus, and Seeman's involvement, if not in body, then certainly in spirit, was widely suspected. Seeman recalled little of the rebellion in his Recollections, saying only that, even though he was at home ill with the flu at the time, few suspected that he, "the prominent radical," was back of it. Seeman suggested the students were inspired by recent strikes at West Durham's Erwin Cotton Mills, one of the Dukes' early textile enterprises.<sup>18</sup>





The rebellion was triggered by a seemingly insignificant difference between the men's pan-hellenic council and a fraternity, arising over an infraction of rushing rules. Quickly it grew to an open revolt by students who criticized many of the university policies satirized in "Vision," ones that Seeman and Dean Baldwin had tried in a small way to improve when they started Explorers' Club as wholesome recreation for students. The students complained of the autocratic attitude of an administration that refused to allow students to control their own affairs. The mass meeting that followed demanded from the administration a new deal that would provide academic freedom, student self-government, and consequently would improve the morale of the student body. The student leaders charged that university officials arbitrarily overruled student governing bodies, that faculty members undermined the confidence of students by open attacks on governing powers, and that students were given only a little part to play in a great university. The most significant charge was the one contending that the morale of the student body was badly shaken by the continued bickering of faculty members who were hostile to the administration. Some students felt that this charge was a red herring designed deliberately to divert attention from the discontent of students with conditions created by the autocratic rule of the administration.<sup>19</sup>

The president of the student body presided over the first mass meeting and described not only the philosophical differences



that existed between students and administration but also spoke to the smaller but equally irritating complaints about high prices and low quality of food in the university dining hall, the policy of allowing campus police to have access to students' locked rooms without apparent cause, and the system of forcing students to pay fines of \$2 and \$5 for such trivial offences as throwing cigarette stubs in the hall, marking on the walls, and spilling water on floors.

From students and faculty a Committee for Investigation and Recommendations on Student Affairs (CIRSA) was appointed. After telegrams from irate students to endowment trustees, mass meetings on campus, statements and denials on all sides, wide newspaper coverage, and an interim report, CIRSA recommended a new constitution for student government, a modified charter of the pan-hellenic council, and changes in policies of the campus police, the university store monopoly, dormitory regulation, the fining system and student publications. The administration accepted most of the recommendations, but not those on publications. Richard Austin Smith, then editor of the The Archive, the student literary magazine, and a member of CIRSA, made the recommendations that would change the control of the publication board from administration to students, in essence creating a free press with reasonable restrictions. In an essay written in 1984 for the Duke University Archives, and in a recent telephone interview, Smith recalled the incidents. Not only were his recommendations rejected, but he also lost his position as





editor despite the accolades given his issues the previous year. Moreover, Wannamaker threatened that if Smith continued to criticize the administration in the final (May) issue of the magazine, he would not be allowed to return to Duke for his senior year.<sup>20</sup>

Smith did not heed Wannamaker's warning. A two-page editorial in the May 1934 issue of the The Archive in black ink "For Better" and in red ink "For Worse" presented Duke's positive and negative attributes as perceived by Smith and, as evidenced by the recent rebellion, felt also by many other students. The university was described as potentially one of the finest educational institutions in America, with fine libraries and many distinguished professors on its faculty, a pleasant climate, reasonable tuition and living expenses, but hampered by limited cultural opportunities both in Durham and on the campus. The editor accused the Duke administration of having little time for student affairs, so intent was it on publicizing its buildings, football teams and prominent guest speakers, so as to create an illusion of a great university without going through the actual labor necessary for its construction. Other criticisms were: that Duke University was filled with deadwood, professors who were retained because they cooperated with the administration even though their academic contributions were outmoded; the university offered nothing that could be either loved or venerated because student comforts and the provisions of attractive surroundings were ignored; Duke offered no opportunity



or encouragement for the arts, nor any encouragement for intellectual pursuits (only ten scholarships given); the faculty reacting to the restraint and general mugginess of the intellectual atmosphere, offered a minimal education; Duke meddled in student affairs, by maintaining "Citizenship Records" of student leaders, particularly editors of student publications, records concerned more with the students' willingness to cooperate with the administration than with their editorial ability. Smith's editorial ended with a statement that "the administration has a thin skin" and "Duke University will never be worthy of the name college, will give nothing of insight or satisfaction to its students until the administration begins to build it from the inside out, not from the outside in."<sup>21</sup>

This diatribe from Smith, partly a reiteration of the charges voiced in the student revolt, brought a rejoinder from Few, who asked Smith to write an apology and a retraction. Smith asked what he should retract. When Few said that it was up to the editor, that it would not be made public, only put in the safe "pending good behavior" for 1935, Smith refused, thereby sacrificing his senior year at Duke to his stand for a free press outside the control of the administration. The publication council, still under administration control, elected a person to succeed Smith as editor of the The Archive who had little editorial experience, and rumors abounded that three campus leaders "overlooked" in elections to Omicron Delta Kappa, a



national honorary leadership fraternity, were not selected because of their activities with CIRSA.<sup>22</sup>

Time, reporting the incident, "Revolt at Duke," read more meaning into the event than the dissatisfaction of students.<sup>23</sup> Few, Flowers and Wannamaker, it said, refused "to adjust themselves to running a big university instead of a small college." It, as well as the Durham Sun,<sup>24</sup> suggested that there was a major conflict away from the campus--the control of the university by its board of trustees (two-thirds elected--or more accurately, ratified-- by the Methodist church conferences, one-third by alumni), whose method of selection had been left untouched since Trinity College days, versus control by the board of the Duke Endowment who controlled the revenues from the endowment. Time quoted Wannamaker, verifying that the administration was attempting to minimize the importance and effects of the entire episode: "I like to see the students have some fun. They acted too hastily. They do not know exactly what they want now but they are earnest and sincere and something will grow out of it."

Flowers wrote to Alex Sands of the Duke Endowment office, to whom the students had sent a telegram asking him to come to Durham from New York to investigate their complaints.<sup>25</sup> Flowers too minimized the students' charges, saying "most of the complaints are of minor importance, all of which can be attended to. Some of them are puerile in the extreme." He explained that the resolution concerning constraints placed on the faculty's





teaching proved that the entire happening did not originate with the students. "You will recall that I mentioned to you the fact that some such thing was planned sometime ago along with other things such as you have seen referred to in the newspapers and magazines like Mercury."<sup>26</sup> Flowers also minimized the situation to chairman of the Duke University trustees, John F. Bruton. He wrote that the situation on the campus "was no surprise to me because I have known for some time that such disturbance was on the program. It is my opinion that the students have acted foolish beyond measure but it is also my opinion that they have been made dupes of designing people." He wrote Bruton that both Sands and Perkins who had received telegrams from the students had "paid no attention to them."<sup>27</sup>

Few also wrote to Bruton asking him if the board should make an official announcement about the matter which he reported: "The little disturbance among the students has not impressed me much except that I know it has been encouraged too much by men higher up."<sup>28</sup>

In his Recollections Seeman did not mention the newspaper accounts that described him:

It is said that he [Seeman] was directly charged with being hostile toward the administration, with fostering insurrection among the students and was warned to cease such activities. Included in the charges against Mr. Seeman was the intimation that he was connected with the publication of the "Vision of King Paucus," a



satirical play distributed on the campus in the fall, in which the administration was roasted severely.<sup>29</sup>

Following a conversation with Flowers, Seeman denied any part in "inciting or taking part in the recent student uprising. I have not assumed that there could be any objection to anyone advising a student that if the students have, or believe they have, grievances, it is entirely proper for them to present those grievances for the consideration of the administration." He elaborated on his position:

I am sorry that the general unsettled conditions here have driven you to suspect me of disloyalty to Duke University. In view of the fact that I am not guilty of charges for which you have no basis other than suspicion, I am writing you to insist that the administration discontinue the circulation of such charges against me for the reason that these charges are libelous and calculated to, and are, defaming my character and standing in this community.<sup>30</sup>

One paragraph in Seeman's letter to Flowers may be untruthful. He wrote: "I deny collaborating in any article about Duke University, or any of its officials. You have no evidence and I should be glad to have you produce any." Correspondence between Few and his long-time friend, president of Wofford College, Henry N. Snyder, indicated that Seeman had written or participated in the writing of material derogatory to Duke University. Few wrote to Snyder:





. . . somebody from Durham was in the habit of sending you news stories concerning Duke University with a more or less unfavorable slant. I wish you would check up on this and let me know just what you have or have heard. You might find your correspondence under the name of Buttitta or Seeman. At least these are the men whom we have under vehement suspicion. They have been making a sort of local newspaper war on Wannamaker. We have stood a good deal of this sort of thing and patience has ceased to be a virtue. I think that at least they ought to be put on the spot so that people can know who it is involved.<sup>31</sup>

Snyder replied that "the name of the man attached to the news items that have come to me is Buttitta. . . . I do not recall having received anything from Seeman."<sup>32</sup> He wrote that all of the items were dated at Durham and that he had not answered any of the letters, and had thrown each one into the waste basket as he made "a habit of destroying everything that seems in any way to reflect on my friends."<sup>33</sup>

Few also wrote to W. A. Stanbury, Methodist preacher and member of the committee he had appointed to study the controversy about dancing in 1927, asking for the same information that he wanted from Snyder:

I remember your giving me an account of talks you have had with the N & O [News and Observer, Raleigh] office and Mr. Buttitta in Durham. I am wondering if you will



be good enough to write this out and send it to me at your convenience. Some of these same men, as you have observed, have been rather active again. I should like if possible to have sufficient facts to smoke them out.<sup>34</sup>

Among the Few papers is a letter of February 22, 1934, directed to him and signed by twenty-seven professors, many of them heads of departments, many close associates of Seeman, including McDougall (first signature on the letter), Miller, Pearse and Lundholm. The preface read:

It has been brought to our attention that certain newspapers have alleged that academic freedom does not exist in Duke University and that the Faculty are dissatisfied. As members of the Faculty we are glad to testify that freedom of teaching does exist in our departments. We hold that unrestricted freedom of teaching is required to advance knowledge and to correct error. Fortunately the principle has been recognized from the first by Duke University. We appreciate the cooperation of yourself and the Board of Trustees in helping us to uphold academic freedom, and we, in turn, pledge our cooperation and support to you and to the Board in maintaining the high standard which Duke University has set in this respect.<sup>35</sup>

N. I. White of the English Department, who had been singled out for censure by George G. Allen because he belonged to the Socialist Party, wrote to Few three days after signing the



petition, stating his reservations. Pearse was the member of the committee who asked White to sign, thus giving some identity to the promoters. White explained that he signed because he did not want to embarrass other signers but that he had "not been apprised of any press allegations that academic freedom was endangered at Duke" and had never seen any such charge himself. He also objected to the reference of "dissatisfaction" at Duke and felt it had no place in the document because it would suggest to the careless reader that signers were denying charges that dissatisfaction existed as well as charges of suppression. He wrote that though it is quite probable that dissatisfaction had been distorted by recent unfortunate occurrences, he did not want it inferred that he thought none existed. He wrote that "not only have I never been interfered with in the classroom, but that I have never been otherwise 'suppressed.'"<sup>36</sup>

The feelings of antagonism rampant on the campus were laid aside temporarily on February 12, 1934, at news of Dean Moxley Arnold's death in an automobile accident. Naming the popular dean's successor placed another responsibility on Few, already burdened with the student rebellion. Even before the funeral, applicants asked for interviews and sent recommendations. "Arnold the sheep" had been a character in "Vision," with no speaking part. Dean Arnold's death, however, elicited a letter from Seeman to Wannamaker that was so exaggeratedly contrite that sarcasm appeared to enter. Seeman wrote:





On this the burial day of Dean Arnold--chivalrous white knight of young manhood that he was--I am moved to send you for his memory's sake these God-made symbols of freshness and purification of life and purpose. They will, I am sure, convey to you better than any feeble words I could utter to you, the deep sense of shame and unworthiness I feel at the recent savage and unguarded expressions toward you of my worser self. Twice I have come to your office to try and tell you those things, but both times you were out. I want you to know that henceforth I earnestly seek your friendship; and on the memory of that splendid youth I promise never again to say a hard word or think a hard thought of you--his most cherished friend and ideal.

From Dr. Flowers I have recently had an illuminating light on the ideals of the administration, and from now on I shall consider it a pleasure as well as a duty to spread zealously among my friends this enlarged vision of its high and unselfish purposes.

Yours in the fullness of a contrite heart.<sup>37</sup>

The publication of "Vision" and Seeman's questionable part in it still had not faded. In his letter to Flowers when he denied any part in the student uprising, he had again voiced a denial which was not quite true as regarded the lampoon:

I deny that I had any part whatever in connection with the writing or circulation of the King Paucus lampoon.



Your inability to produce any evidence with reference to my participation is because there is no evidence. If you have any evidence, I should be glad to have you produce it.<sup>38</sup>

From Spartanburg, S.C. at the home at his brother-in-law, where he was recovering from an attack of flu, Seeman wrote Few, still maintaining his ignorance about the parody:

Since our last conversation I have talked with the students mentioned but with an unexpected result. It seems that they had been merely "stringing" me along to see how far they could impose on my credulity, and really had no part in the notorious "King Paucus" affair whatever. Therefore, regardless of my, or your, former beliefs, I am now convinced that these youngsters really did not participate in the outrage, but have merely been acting a part in a prank at my expense.

I regret that this clew has panned out to be of no value.<sup>39</sup>

After the excitement generated by the publication of "Vision" and the frenetic activity of the student rebellion, a quiet irrevocable decision was given Seeman by the Board of Managers of the Duke Press on July 24, 1934, the same decision that he had hoped to change the previous September:

Whereas it appears from the financial report of the Press that there is an existing debt to the University of \$4,000 which in the opinion of this committee





[management committee] should be liquidated as rapidly as possible and which will necessitate a curtailment in the expenses of conducting the Press, it is therefore resolved that the office of manager of the Press now held by Mr. Ernest Seeman be abolished.<sup>40</sup>

Present at the meeting were Flowers, Treasurer of the University Markham, Judge T. D. Bryson, university attorney, present by invitation, and Dwire who was authorized to notify Seeman that, at the expiration of his contract on October 15, 1934, "the contract would not be renewed, such position having been discontinued." R. O. Rivera, library staff member, was immediately appointed as executive secretary of the press and David K. Jackson as acting business manager, with the position of assistant editor of Character and Personality left unfilled.

Four letters remained to tell the saga of Ernest Seeman at Duke. He wrote to President Graham of the University of North Carolina to ask for a job. He explained that he came to Duke to think, write and inspire young people and help them to find useful work:

Now along with the blood purge against liberalism over here, I've got fired. Of course it's a good thing; the air's too dam close here. I can't worship golden calves nor wear muzzles.

He regretted that he had no degree, only "the curse of versatility." He offered to work for no pay for one year:\*



I have a slight income and would welcome work in the enlightenment of parents about handling young children mentally, or publicity or socialization of students or vocational help to them or research in psychology, or anything dealing with people, especially the young.

. . . I expect to be around this dump until October 15.

. . . It's great to know that there's one honest-to-god educator in our NC desert.<sup>41</sup>

\* I get \$4200 here.

Apparently Seeman held out little hope that Graham would offer him a post because he wrote to friends in South Carolina of his plans, asking for examples of coincidences that they had experienced, in order to help him in an article he was writing on the subject of coincidence. He informed them that he had been fired:

But to me salary is nothing when weighed against wearing intellectual bridle and bit. I'm moving to Orange County and becoming a free-lance writer. Indeed an institution oriented toward education and ethics but manned by a bunch of capitalistic barons is little better from a social viewpoint than a frigate manned by a buccaneer! See my first article in Forum in October or November issue.<sup>42</sup>

Seeman's last two letters were written at the time of his departure, one to Alice Baldwin concerning his hopes for the continuation of Explorers' Club and his thwarted plans for a



"Story-Tellers Ring" in the Duke Forest. He thanked her and Mason Crum of the Divinity School, both long-time explorers for "salvaging" the club, and, ever the dreamer, Seeman asked her to try in the near future, perhaps through the Explorers' Club, to continue the request to the forest committee to set aside about an acre to establish "a society endeavoring to revive, as a civic contribution, the primitive art of the spoken narrative."<sup>43</sup> He reminded Baldwin that he had set up a fine list of sponsors including Eva Le Gallienene, Robert Frost, Percy MacKaye and others, and that Clarence Korstian and William Maughan, both explorers and professors in the Forestry School, had picked a splendid site and under acceptable auspices, probably would receive cooperation from the administration.<sup>44</sup>

On October 15, 1934 Seeman wrote his last letter to Few:

I am leaving the University today. In doing so, I must thank you very warmly for many opportunities of these past ten years. The pleasant and developing contacts in the college world. The interesting job of nursing a young Press. The very interesting firsthand view of an adolescent University seeking its creative-social levels.

You shall always have my sincere goodwill, Sir. If I can ever do you any favors, please call on me freely. To Drs. Flowers and Wannamaker I also extend sincerest good wishes for their future happiness and success. Now and then, to be sure, I may write





critically of universities, along with other evolving institutions. I shall never have any malice. In my viewpoint, all institutions belong primarily to the people and are due to be examined and criticized freely. The more open their conduct, the less criticism needed. The more clannish their operation, and the slyer their propaganda, the more criticism necessary to prevent long cycles of error or a natural relapse into feudalism and high-priestly ways.

As an understanding man, you will, therefore, I am sure, believe me (in spite of any social convictions I may harbor, or in future express), Always yr very sincere friend and well-wisher.<sup>45</sup>

### Conclusions

Why did Duke University fire Ernest Seeman? Hundreds of letters and newspaper clippings give only vague answers. They intimate, hint at and suggest, but in doing so, only raise additional questions. An effort to uncover his real problem results only in the unanswered question: How far beyond the established system set up by the inherent authority and devised restrictions of the university which hired him did he and his sympathizers operate to develop their interests and talents? Did their activities extend to radical measures outside the structure set up by the university to accomodate their liberal thought? Or did Seeman think, and act on the assumption, that there was no way within the provincial structure at Duke to develop to any



extent liberal thought as he conceived it and that he therefore would attempt at any cost to change the structure?

Seeman's last letter to Few is an example of one problem--the absence of communication between Seeman and the administration. Why did Seeman never feel free to talk honestly with administration officials? Considering his activities during his last year at Duke and the writing of "Duke: But not Doris" two years later, the extreme good will expressed in the letter to Few is suspect. Several reasons for his lack of communication come to mind. He acted on honest motivation in arranging the peace rally in 1928 and was chastised for his ignorance that university activities must not be detrimental to financial interests of endowment trustees. Did he feel "burned" by his experience, determining never to allow it to happen again?

Was he hurt by a misinterpretation of his motives in organizing the Explorers' Club? Apparently spurred only by love of out-of-doors, an interest in young people and a wish to furnish wholesome recreation, did he feel repudiated when the administration intimated it was a vehicle for his liberal ideas?

What were his liberal ideas? Freedom of an individual to pursue his own interests and talents figured largely in Seeman's philosophy, innocuous thinking that quietly pursued would likely have gone unquestioned in an academic setting. He wrote in defense of individualized education based largely on learning from reading, and vocational guidance as a tool to direct young people in a way that would develop their greatest talents and





interests. Flowers, in a letter to J. A. Thomas, promised that the administration would cooperate with Seeman to develop a program of vocational guidance at Duke but no program resulted. Did Seeman not realize that, even if the administration were interested in such a program, that he had no credentials to establish it in a university? The individualized education he advocated was in conflict with the established methodology of the time, a difference of opinion between Seeman and Few which he recalled with an intensity that precluded any discussion:

I was on good terms with Mrs. Few. . . . And she often would see me on the campus and would invite me to supper at the president's house, and I would go. Few and I would get in an argument; we were diametrically opposed on education. He was everything for the established, and I wasn't! I'd combat him.<sup>46</sup>

Even in areas in which the men were in agreement no evidence exists that they knew when they agreed, for example, that Norman Thomas should be allowed to speak on the campus. Their reasons were different--Seeman thought students should be allowed to join the Socialist Party if they so chose, and Few, with a more academic viewpoint, thought students should be exposed to differing political philosophies. They also concurred that the Socialist Party should appear on the ballot, but they may not have known of their common position.

Why did Seeman never learn that self-education and a knowledge of printing were not sufficient for his total autonomy



at the press? During his early years at Duke he worked hard to develop it into an organization of international reputation, one of which the university could be proud. Even in those early years it is unlikely that he knew his position was insecure or that the delay in organizing the press was partly due to him. Seeman's position there placed him a status more like staff than like faculty. Why was he seemingly unaware of this difference? Many of his confrontations with professors Boyd, Rippey and Baum resulted from his assumption of editorial authority unjustified by his managerial position. Was the constant antagonism with the faculty associated with the press an indication of the resentment he felt at the authority exerted over him by faculty working with the press? His close friendship with members of the psychology department, particularly McDougall, resulted from a dedicated interest in human behavior, and even though he was instrumental in organizing Character and Personality, serving as associate editor, no matter how close he felt to the psychologists, he always remained a lay person in a group of academicians.

Seeman's activities during the summer of 1933 have not been traced. "Hostile to the administration," the description of him in the newspaper at the time of the student rebellion, may have originated in a slurring, critical or derogatory comment unwisely made and repeated by a listener to a Duke official. Despite his denial to the administration, by his own admission, he was aware of and involved in the publication of "The Vision of King Paucus." After he knew he was to be dismissed, why did he



continue to conceal the name of its author and his involvement? His secretiveness about his activities caused an aura of deception which obscured the accuracy of the accusations made against him. Did his secretiveness serve to avoid possible confrontation or to hide disloyal conduct still unrevealed in 1987?

The coupling of Seeman's name with that of Tony Buttitta has the potential of leading to incriminating evidence. Before establishing a book store in Durham, Buttitta operated the Raleigh branch of a bookstore operated by Milton (Ab) Abernathy. Rumor was that Ab's Bookstore in Chapel Hill was the center of "unAmerican activities" for the area. Few's letter to Snyder and Stanbury associating Seeman with Buttitta could have been based either on Few's firm knowledge, or a simple case of trying to substantiate widespread rumor. Evidence is lacking of any relationship between Seeman and Buttitta, but when, in 1933, Buttitta opened his book store in Durham, it can be assumed that Seeman visited it.<sup>47</sup> Seeman does not mention Buttitta in his Recollections. Neither did he name the author of "Vision" but he gleefully recounted the episode without revealing its author. His enjoyment of sub rosa activities makes one wonder if he would have passed up an opportunity to recall contacts with a communist cell.

Any event in the 1930s must be judged in the context not only of the political climate but also of the economic atmosphere of the depression. Whether or not Seeman believed he was





dismissed for financial reasons, he knew that the university needed more money. Yet he could have had no idea of the financial problems that hounded Few. Few's personal financial problems were always present, and in addition he had to meet the current and long-term financial responsibilities of the university, preserve the favor of the endowment trustees who controlled endowment funds--and, all the while, maintain the institution's academic integrity. Few was a patient man who tried to make peace and generate an air of optimism. A thick skin would have served him well in controversial situations where he often said that he was pained to be forced to cause unhappiness to one party. It would also have allowed him to treat more lightly the criticism directed at the university, instead of causing him to suffer as he did when the barbs were thrown. There was no place in this burdened man's thinking for criticism, particularly satire. One burden whose activity he could not firmly pinpoint but of which he felt he could rid himself was Ernest Seeman.

In answer to whether Ernest Seeman knew he walked a "thin line" in his relation to the Duke administration, Janet Earl replied: "Yes! I think Seeman knew he walked a thin line and gloried in it!"<sup>48</sup> A person who knew him well but prefers to remain anonymous described him: "Ernest wanted to save the world; he wanted to save it now; and he wanted to save it the way he wanted to save it," even if it meant turning from an idealist to an iconoclast.



To paint the most negative scenario, Seeman was an inefficient and troublesome manager of the press who ran afoul of too-important faculty members and administrators--especially in a time of stringent budgeting. A kindlier description would recall from "Square Pegs" (1929) his life-time motivation: "Divine curiosity and iconoclastic imagination--the larva of the future thinker, innovator or inventor," forces that did not allow him to veer although he sometimes seemed to try. The remainder of the sentence voiced his fears that a boy, motivated in the way he described, himself in fact, "more often than not [was] mistaken by his teachers for an egregious dolt or at best stigmatized as queer."

Ernest Seeman had an additional image remembered from childhood--a father who "never had the slightest understanding of the willful and wayward duckling that the fates brought to his eyrie," the father who burst into uncontrolled laughter when young Ernest told him of his ambitions. Seeman was never able to throw off the remembrance of that image and that sound. Individuality resulting from such motivation might have been tolerated, even admired, at a later time and place, but in Duke University during the early 1930s, Ernest Seeman remained "a square peg."





## Epilogue

In the Arms of the Mountain<sup>1</sup>

On October 15, 1934, Ernest Seeman had reason to be devastated. Not only were his personal losses great but the state of the national economy in the middle thirties made unrealistic any optimism toward another job and a new start. Elizabeth Seeman's interview is more revealing than that of her husband about the events occurring at the time of his leaving Duke. "His [first] wife had left him because he had lost his position at Duke. And she also had wanted money and he never had made enough to suit her and so she said if ever he lost his position he would lose her."<sup>2</sup> A release by Robert Dahlin from Dial Press when American Gold was published quoted Elizabeth Seeman:

And in two weeks he lost everything in his life. His job. His wife, his first wife that was, who took away their son. People said he turned into a wrinkled old man in those two weeks. That's when he went into the country.<sup>3</sup>

There is no evidence of any communication between Ernest and his son, William, for several years, but the father was aware of his son's activities. In a letter to University of North Carolina President Graham, September 12, 1938, congratulating him on an article in New Republic, "A Report of the South," Seeman



recommended a Columbia Press publication, "Philanthropic Foundations and Higher Education," which spoke "all good" about Chapel Hill and some to the contrary about "Dear Old Duke." Seeman concluded, "My son is enrolling at UNC this fall and I only hope he can pick up the social vision that is so carefully kept off the menu at D.U."<sup>4</sup> Neither is there any information concerning the disposition of any jointly owned property by the Seeman couple. There is no indication that Ernest considered the Ivy Mountain cabin near Bahama a reasonable place for his retreat. Instead he went to a falling-down, rat-infested cabin owned by a friend. It was off the Cabe Ford Road, near the Eno River, where Pleasant Green Road meets Highway 70, about five miles west of Durham.<sup>5</sup>

Years later, Seeman recalled the adventures that followed. An old friend, Neil Fossie, a groomsman in his wedding, visited him in an effort to effect a reconciliation with Julia Seeman. That effort was unavailing but Seeman was successful in collecting from him on long terms an old debt (Seeman remembered it as \$1,000). That money sustained him while he wrote during the winter of 1934-35, concentrating on a little book named for his retreat, "Grasshopper Farm" (unpublished), largely about the life he lived, isolated and close to nature.

With the coming of spring he took what he had written to New York, hoping to sell it, as well as to begin a new set of adventures in Greenwich Village and on the East Side. An acquaintance from his Duke days, a man employed by the Duke



Endowment, visited and through him Seeman met Elizabeth Brickel Klinger.<sup>6</sup> An artist and writer, she was, like Seeman, in the process of getting a divorce. She shared Ernest's interest in radicalism, his hatred for Mussolini, and his enjoyment in walking all over New York, eating at little foreign restaurants, visiting free galleries, and attending concerts and lectures. When she had an opportunity to join a firm in Chicago as an illustrator of greeting cards, Ernest followed her there. As soon as their divorces were final, they were married.

They took a six-month honeymoon down the west coast of Mexico where Ernest was critically ill with a fever. Returning to Chicago in a blizzard, Elizabeth contracted a sore throat that lasted for three years. Since her sore throat disappeared on her visits out of the city, a doctor told her that her condition resulted from tension and recommended that she move away.

Elizabeth later described her pioneer and Indian ancestry which contributed, along with her psychosomatic sore throat, to the decision to move to a "wild and beautiful unspoiled place." Ernest's requirements were a fine rare spot of land where there were "good, nice people, and fine, bright people, and not too queer and too wild and too dangerous." He wanted the land to be near a national forest to preclude encroaching development. According to Elizabeth, however, Ernest was so much in love with his writing that he could have lived in any kind of place if he could continue his writing.





To find such a place Elizabeth sent him to the Smoky Mountains, "beautiful and friendly and full of mystery." He walked over 150 miles with a mountain boy they used to know when they camped in the area and reported that he had found the place of their dreams, 100 acres in a thinly populated area in southern Unicoi County, Tennessee. It was not a farm with some sort of shack and barn and cleared ground, but an uncleared piece of land near the government forest with no house or garden area, just forest and a series of waterfalls from which "Tumblin' Creek" got its name. They were forced to borrow money to build a little cabin and, said Elizabeth, they went into "the arms of the mountain" with "two chairs, two army cots, a couple of skillets, my drawing table, a few books, and fifty cents left over."

The land they settled did not meet the idyllic preconceptions of either. There were no roads; bags ("pokes") tied on a stick and carried Chinese coolie style, horseback and land sleds pulled by horses brought in whatever the Seemans needed.

Elizabeth was always as vague in her recollection of dates as was Ernest. She stated that she could not recall her wedding date and her descriptions of the early days at Tumblin' Creek were dated only by the fact that "World War II had begun." Their isolation and primitive life style caused astonishment and suspicion among their few mountain neighbors, who decided that they must be spies. They had no animals, their chickens were chosen for their unusual specklings and different kind of colors;



they received and sent large amounts of mail and local speculation held that the drawings Elizabeth sent to Chicago must surely be of maps and other spy materials. From friends they received after the war expensive French and English magazines, German papers, and a vast array of magazines, from the most radical to the most conservative, all materials contributing to the mountain people's impressions. Their choice of land with its proximity to the unpopulated areas of Cherokee National Forest was viewed as a means for a quick escape route in the event their spying activities were uncovered. Their bird houses became short wave transmitters for them to talk to Italy, Germany and Japan, and they owned "secret weapons."

To add reality to the fabrications, FBI agents from Asheville, Erwin and Johnson City came to interview the newcomers, whom the bureau considered radical because their names were found in Chicago on a petition to allow the Communist Party to appear on a ballot. Although they had radical and communist friends in New York and Chicago, Elizabeth stated that neither of them ever was a member of the party, but that a young communist friend had asked them to sign the petition, and they thought his party had a legal right to be on the ballot. Much later Ernest met one of the FBI investigators in the VA Hospital and the agent told Ernest: "Well, actually, they never had anything on you except that you read too much and too widely." Rumors about the Seemans reached a point so dangerous that their possessions and lives were threatened; yet their infrequent contacts with





mountain people yielded only "sweet talk" which changed when the natives talked among themselves, each one telling a more embroidered story.

A chink in the hostility of the mountain people was made by an incident, natural in its occurrence but far-reaching in its effect. A cow belonging to a woman who lived in the cove wandered onto the Seeman land. When she came looking for her animal, she found Elizabeth and Ernest washing dishes in the creek, and she spread the word that the so-called spies were pleasant, friendly people who were "all right." Even the FBI who had done the investigating looked up their background and reported, "You've got good neighbors there." Elizabeth stated that, in spite of their friendship with the mountain people who were convinced that they had done nothing dangerous, their neighbors always considered the Seemans to be communists, and the tinge of suspicion that remained made the neighbors continue to check up on license plates of the cars that brought visitors, as well as the number of passengers in each. (Elizabeth never showed signs of paranoia but it is apparent that she was unfamiliar with people who live in isolated areas where such curiosity is common.)

The growing friendliness, however, did not bring happiness to their Eden. They had no money. The barren land grew little foodstuff, and they were too far from a market to sell either the eggs from their growing flock of chickens, or their rabbits, ducks, bees, goat milk or butchered bucks. By the early 1950s,



poor nutrition and the poor light in the cabin, sheltered by hemlocks and often darkened by mountain storms, contributed to the development of Elizabeth's glaucoma. With no electricity to furnish light, she was forced to abandon her drawing of commercial designs. Electricity and a road finally came, but never a telephone. She realized that the mountain people survived because one member of the family, usually the father, went to work away from the mountain. Since Ernest was not strong enough to go, she returned in the early 1950s to Chicago for a year to receive treatment for her eye condition, make some money, and improve her general health. Too old to get a factory job she served a year as a governess in a wealthy home.

That year, even though she spent it as a highly regarded servant, made Elizabeth's return to Tumblin' Creek a joyous homecoming. Ernest's health had been as fragile as that of his wife, and he had spent the year in the VA Hospital, building up his strength for an operation.

During the years that Elizabeth cultivated gardens, canned produce, herded goats, fended off hawks, weasels and snakes that ate eggs and chickens, and cut and hauled wood and water, Ernest was not idle. Above the cabin where they lived, they had built for him a ten-by-twelve cabin, just the size of Thoreau's at Walden, with a big table and a wooden bed, which he reached each night by mounting a short ladder on the steep hill and continuing to climb up the trail. He often stayed for days and nights when he worked on American Gold, then titled Tobacco Town. He had



begun in the 1930s the roman à clef, a thinly-veiled, biting history of Durham and the Duke family.<sup>7</sup> Even though Elizabeth was left largely alone, she felt that her husband had "the personality of genius for work. He was never tired of his work and never any amount of effort or time was too much to put on it." When the interviewer asked her if she felt put in second place, she answered:

You literally are, because I understand that a creative person has to do that and has to be ruthless enough to do it. And you have to have the depth of understanding to appreciate that and know that really, if a creative person didn't have that complete absorption in his work, then he couldn't do really good work. And you have to make up your mind that everything you have is going to be sacrificed for that book. And then you build your own life independently of that, though.

Ernest tried to market the book. He received no encouragement from publishers when they saw the 1,000 pages of manuscript, and the cost of postage from Tennessee to New York made continued mailing prohibitive. Soon it was relegated to a shelf to gather dust.

Happy at returning to Tumblin' Creek and with a small pension from the Navy to alleviate somewhat their poverty, Elizabeth started work again on a children's book that she had begun on their honeymoon in Mexico. When she saw in Writer Magazine an announcement of an international contest by Franklin





Watts Publishing Company, New York, she submitted her book, The Talking Dog and the Barking Man, and won a prize of \$1,000. "In the midst of starvation it was amazing."<sup>8</sup>

An unforeseen consequence, bringing untold enjoyment and benefits, was the beginning of Tumblin' Creek Library. In New York, Elizabeth mentioned to her editor, Sarah Chokla Gross, that she had always had the notion that she would like to make their home a cultural center, and in Chicago, she had been collecting children's books as the nucleus of a small library. Mrs. Gross told Elizabeth that, in memory of her young daughter who had died, she would like to help other children by making books available. She soon started sending books to Tumblin' Creek. Elizabeth mended scuffed covers, broken corners, torn pages, and assembled sets of unmatched reference books, and Ernest set out with a few books in his back pack to show the children in the cove the books and to tell them that there were many more at Tumblin' Creek.

The massive influx of books, however, occurred in 1965, after Mrs. Gross wrote an article in Scholastic Magazine, which went to every school library in the country, and told the story of the Tumblin' Creek Library and of their need for books to lend and to give away. Thousands of books arrived, and the Seemans distributed them to the seventeen children in the cove, then to local libraries, and even to mining towns, old people's homes, sailors on ships, or anywhere they heard of a need for books.<sup>9</sup>





Seeman Letterhead





Adults as well as children trekked up the mountain to find works on mechanics, household hints and cook books. Some fathers built shelves at home, thus starting individual libraries all over the area. Mothers stayed for a meal when they came with garden slips and little packages of seed to exchange. When children came to use the Seemans' encyclopedias for a school project, Elizabeth taught them about the heritage of their mountain land and the pride they should feel. She gave them cocoa with whipped cream, had little parties at Halloween and Christmas, and allowed them to use her drawing materials. Along with the books came boxes of clothes and shoes, and Elizabeth distributed them to the children in the area who were always in need. From as far away as California a boys' club made a project with posters, "Donate books to Tumblin' Creek Library, the Cabin Library," and publishers sent damaged books. The Seemans' thank you letters were full of appreciation, with stories of the new owners of the books and clothes, and accounts of the Seemans' animals and their life in the mountains, illustrated with Ernest's amusing drawings.

As Elizabeth remembered the library, she told of the great friendships and happiness it generated, for the Seemans, the children and their parents who realized that books were harmless--fairy tales, Robinson Crusoe, King Arthur and all the old classics, funny books, and drawing books. She told that many fathers became convinced that reading was not a waste of time



when the children and women "ought to be doing embroidery, knitting, sewing and things like that." The books had been the Seemans' entrée into many places, most important to them the homes of the mountain people. No evidence exists that proves that the benefit from Tumblin' Creek Library equaled the benefit Seeman had promised to young people thirty years earlier from 300-500 volume libraries, but his philosophy that reading was a door to the world outside one's self remained unchanged.

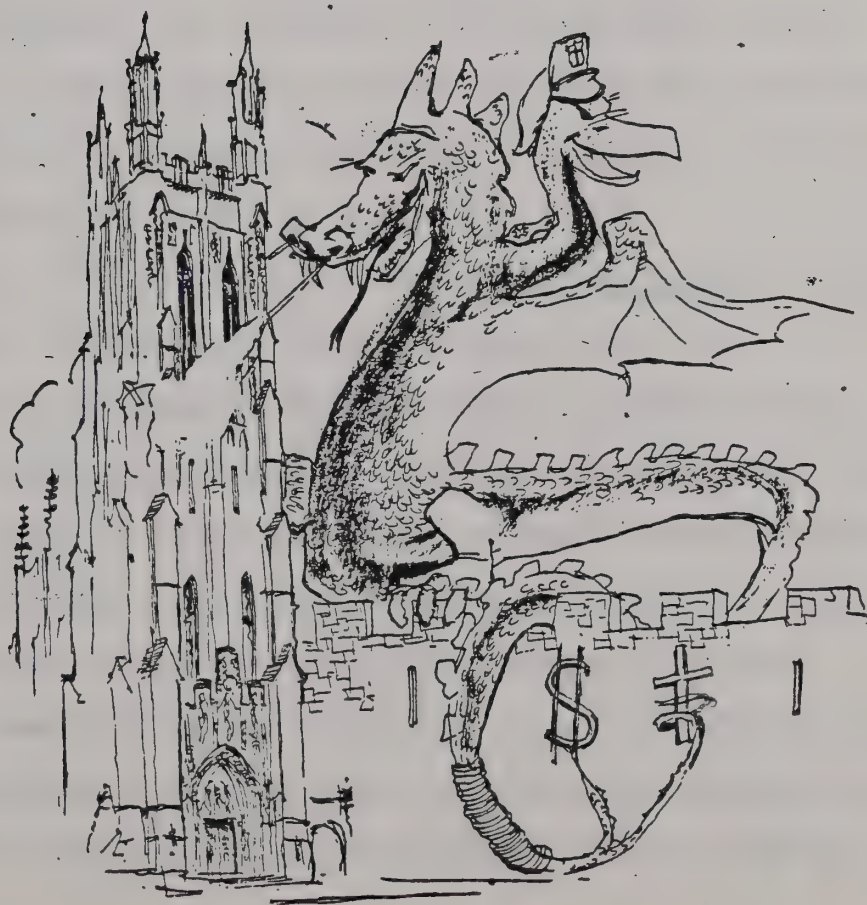
Writing consumed Seeman, and two years after he left the press The New Republic published his most vitriolic diatribe against Duke University and the Duke family.<sup>10</sup> In "Duke: But Not Doris" he repeated the themes that he had long considered subjects for criticism--the Duke Endowment's ostentatious spending, Duke's superficial efforts to achieve academic status, and the lack of academic freedom among the Duke faculty which forced its members to acquiesce to the provincial policies of the administration or to risk dismissal. Seeman objected most to the hypocrisy that he perceived in the determination of the university's policies by the financial interests of the Duke Endowment, rather than by ethical and educational principles. He wrote that the falseness extended to the academic areas where profit and greed determined the direction of scientific investigation and intellectual research. In a later issue of the magazine, three law professors protested that Seeman's accusations about academic freedom in the law school were untrue. They admitted that the episodes Seeman described had occurred, but reported that when they requested



# SMILING DRAGON

A LOOK AT DUKE UNIVERSITY  
IN ITS 25th YEAR

By ERNEST SEEMAN







explanations of the incidents, the answers given them were satisfactory. Moreover, President Few had assured them of their total freedom to criticize the Duke Law School. Their letter ended:

We believe that there is need for another national law school in the south and that one of the concerns of such a school must be the continuous and objective examination of the realities of our social and economic life. . . . Should there be, however, a real infringement of academic freedom in Duke University Law School, we shall not remain silent.<sup>11</sup>

In the November 11, 1936, issue, Seeman answered the letter with more detail of persons and incidents, a reiteration of his criticisms and a final suggestion that the three law professors ask the dismissed law professors for the true version of the controversy and resulting resignations.<sup>12</sup>

Seeman wrote fiction in the 1940s--American Gold, "The Bull and the Thrush", "Grasshopper Farm," a novel about the Elizabethan period in English history and an unnamed trilogy. In the 1950s and 1960s, the phrenetic wandering of his early days returned, this time by means of letters rather than his youthful roamings to Washington, New York, Chicago and England. With the explicit permission of Benjamin Powell, librarian of Duke University, he was allowed to borrow books and to request the Reference Department of the library to investigate sources for material that he needed both for his fiction writing and the



later essays and articles, a privilege he often used from the mid-1940s until the mid-1970s.<sup>13</sup> He began extensive correspondence about his planned articles and books. Caustic and critical, it dealt in large part with subjects connected to Duke University. He often prefaced his letters, "I was a member of the Duke Faculty," a statement hardly justified by his title of manager of the Duke Press and associate editor of journals printed by the press.<sup>14</sup> Whether the passing of years had promoted Seeman in his recollection, or whether he thought that stating he had held a more prestigious position would result in more serious answers to his requests for information and opinions is a moot point.

He collected information on the tobacco industry and wanted to know more about the statement of the American Medical Association and American Cancer Society, "both of which had recently issued authoritative and positive decisions that smoking is one of the PRIMARY [Seeman's capitals] causes of lung cancer at least, and of heart disease."<sup>15</sup> Another interest was the quality of higher education and the possible restraint financial contributions of corporations to the university might exercise over policies of the recipients of the gifts.<sup>16</sup> The value of fraternities on university campuses also interested him.<sup>17</sup>

Seeman's later writings were as diversified as those of his earlier days. He took on the subject of ownership of private utilities and monopolies versus public ownership such as that of the Tennessee Valley Authority.<sup>18</sup> He railed against hostility to





labor unions in the South.<sup>19</sup> And he took on less weighty topics, in particular the Duke family. The following letter--on the letterhead of the Honolulu Record--is in response to a Seeman inquiry:

We have inquired about, but no one knows anything about a \$100,000 silver ladder in Doris Duke's swimming pool. Her place at Black Point, just past Diamond Head in Honolulu, is palatial enough and includes a very small harbor for small boats (which I've never seen used). She has used it seldom; it must be several years since she has been here. So far as I know, it stands useless and has always been useless except during the war when she let top brass use it as a resort.<sup>20</sup>

Through the years the Seemans had many visitors who were inspired by their devotion to their writing and the joy of the mountains. Some of them Elizabeth called "radicals," a term she never defined, but only described as meaning people who are "usually fairly poor, temperamentally unsuited to exploiting anyone, kind hearted and generous people like that [who] just don't make money as a rule." Long-time friends from Duke, New York and Chicago came and new friends acquired through correspondence and the library, many of them young students, paid visits.

In the post-war decades, such visitors were charmed by the primitive life style they discovered after surmounting the hardships of simply finding the place. They wanted to see



Elizabeth bake bread in cast iron pans (a mountain woman had taught her how) and to climb the ladder and trail to the "Thoreau Cabin." Though Ernest and Elizabeth both enjoyed the visitors, often several carloads at a time, Elizabeth found her role of sole cook sometimes overwhelming because Ernest and the visitors explored the creek and the woods, gamboled with the goats, and admired the still-undeveloped surroundings. She described Ernest's role: "He loved to have all the young students sitting around talking [with him acting] like a Greek scholar talking to all his students and his companions."

In the middle 1970s Ernest's health began to deteriorate markedly. During their years on the mountain he had often been in poor health, and had been hospitalized many times, sometimes with surgery. Many changes occurred in their lives and surroundings. They now owned only one acre, the rest having been sold and transformed into sites for vacation and retirement cabins. The children who had been their library patrons were now grown and had left the cove. And Ernest needed more nursing care than Elizabeth could provide. With sadness they distributed the last of the Tumblin' Creek Library and Ernest entered the VA Hospital in Johnson City. For the next three years, he was there and, after January 1976, at the Heritage Nursing Home in Elizabethton, Tennessee.

In a letter to a friend, Elizabeth told of Ernest's last days. In lucid moments, he begged her to bring him home to the mountain. A month before his death on October 19, 1979, aged 92,



she brought him home partially paralyzed and quite deaf. After he pulled out the life-sustaining tubes which he found torturous, he had, at the end, "an almost joyful peace."

Elizabeth described his funeral in the letter:

We had an old fashioned burial for him. The young people around here and a few old mountain friends came. One boy made the coffin from weathered wood like an old Swedish chest. The others dug the grave and we all stood around him in a circle of friendship. He is buried up on Tumblin' Hill above the cove along with old mountain friends. A beautiful peaceful spot with dogwoods below the grave.<sup>21</sup>

In 1976, Mimi Conway, working on an oral history project at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, came across Seeman's name in connection with his pronoun, antimonopoly writings. When she interviewed him and discovered the existence of the manuscript of a novel, she took it to New York where it caught the fancy of the executive editor of Dial Press, Joyce Johnson. Dial cut the 1,000 pages to 283, changed the name from Tobacco Town to American Gold, heralded it as the Great American Novel, and published it in a blaze of nationwide publicity.<sup>22</sup> Barbara Bannon of Publishers' Weekly compared it to Spoon River Anthology and Our Town. "Seeman has written a compulsively readable novel and a superb social history."<sup>23</sup>





Others were not so kind. Mark Pinsky reviewing the book in the Raleigh News and Observer, was more analytical than flattering:

The narrative is choppy . . . and occasionally disjointed. . . . There are, however, flashes of perceptive political observation, as well as examples of the ribald Warham-Duke wit, much of it--in fiction as evidently in fact, not printable in a family newspaper. . . . It explains why and how the North Carolinians in the tobacco industry feel so threatened by the federal government's double-edged attacks on the industry, HEW concentrating on the health hazards and certain members of Congress taking aim at federal crop support.

Unintentionally, perhaps, the novel explains how we have come to the pass where the livelihood of so many North Carolinians, in the short run has come to be tied to the long term ill health of the nation and the world.<sup>24</sup>

Jonathan Yardley, book editor then of the Miami Herald, who had lived and worked in Greensboro for many years, reviewed American Gold in the Washington Post on April 17, 1978. His article described the author as well as the book:

Seeman writes with his fists . . . but . . . his views, unorthodox though they were in their time and place, are argued with commendable sincerity and passion; his



sympathy for the poor, the blacks, and the Jews and his hostility to the rank new tobacco money that owned the town and eventually bought itself a University.<sup>25</sup>

Elizabeth, in answer to the question of whether Ernest understood that his novel had been widely reviewed and highly touted by some, answered: "He knows about it and he's pleased, but he's gone into senility now."<sup>26</sup> Ironically he was too frail and confused even to understand that it had been published. The boy grown into man who set out early to prove to his father that he was capable of accomplishment had achieved fame. Neither Ernest Seeman nor his father ever knew that he had at last done something "splendid and uncommonplace."





## Appendix A

## RECOLLECTIONS OF THE EXPLORERS' CLUB

Recorded in April 1971, in His 83rd Year

by Ernest Seeman

Well, it was in 1924, the year before J. B. Duke died, that I was invited to head up the Duke University Press. My job was publishing books and scholarly journals, but with all the eager, unwithered and enthusiastic young people around, I found time to associate with them too. My office was a crowded cubby-hole in East Duke, and somehow it came to pass that more and more students came to visit and to talk about their aspirations and problems. Pretty soon the dean of women, Miss Baldwin, herself began to come in with problems arising in her own work.

One day I made the remark to Alice Mary Baldwin that Duke was the dullest place I was ever in and I didn't see how the students stood the unnatural strictures everywhere, with only football and prayer meetings seeming to meet official approval as amusements. I knew I was walking in where angels feared to tiptoe, but this sympathetic and intelligent maiden lady--daughter of a strict old New England clergyman who had seen to it that she never had any dates or independence when young--laughed out loud and said: "Well now what would you suggest?" And I said back: "Well I'll think it over and let you know."

And the way I let her know was to issue a printed invitation to a lot of girl and boy students and some of the faculty like



the dean of law, the dean of women, Dr. Frank C. Brown of the English Department, and especially the younger teachers, to come to a mountain picnic fifteen miles out in the country. It was a Sunday afternoon in October and everybody had been advised to wear their hiking clothes and come to Dolphus Tilley's store at Bahama. There would be 3 or 4 miles of walking to do, and guides would be there to lead them to Ivy Mountain, overlooking Flat River. In the meanwhile, I had taken a choice bunch of students out the day before to Ivy to plan the thing. We had a carpenter along to build us a rough table; and a committee of girls, captained by Louise Seabolt (then an undergraduate) were to bring out the beefsteaks and watermelons. The beef selector was to be Janet Earl, because she was from an Iowa cattle ranch. We had a big old coffee-pot and preparations were made for the fire.

Sunday was a lovely afternoon and everybody came, relaxed, adventurous and eager. Now the idea in the back of my head was to bring the teachers and the taught together in a natural and informal outdoor way, (something that in that day "just wasn't done" at Duke).

The student guides took the party up a woodland path to the rendezvous, and already there was singing. When we got there, the fire was ablaze, the steaks were sizzling and the melons being cracked, and everybody was hungry as a flock of bears. Then after supper, we all gathered round the fire and there was yet another surprise. Johnny Long, the violinist (who later became famous in New York) played Massenet's "Elegy" on his violin in the twilight, accompanied by another student on the



trumpet. It was very impressive. So impressive that away up the river a great horned owl, hearing this new noise in his woods, began to shriek and hoot. Then singing and tale-telling till about nine; when a big beautiful full moon was rising, and we started back down the "long long trail a-winding." The aroma of wild grapes was in the crisp autumn air, and I still remember it after forty years (as I hope some others do too) as one of the most beautiful of evenings. Dean Baldwin was walking on my left and Dean of Law Justin Miller on my right. "Oh, it's wonderful!" exclaimed Alice Mary, throwing her inhibitions to the breeze and all caught up in the joy of living. "Why can't we keep this up?"

"That's just the question I hoped you'd ask," said I.

"Let's start a walking club."

Dean Miller plucked a \$20 bill from his billfold and said:

"This is to start it rolling. Organize it any way you like."

And that was when and how our Explorers' Club got started.

Exie Duncan, my most efficient and understanding secretary, [after April 1932] volunteered to mail out the little brown card invitations for every other weekend (one week the hikes being on Saturday, the next time on Sunday). She skillfully arranged it so that anybody who was interested could be frequently invited. And by-and-by the explorers got so popular that people gathered at Kilgo, our jump-off place, in droves--whether invited or not.

Hike No. 1 was a "loner," an "odd ball," as word hadn't yet got around. Only three of us met at the rendezvous spot on the road near Kilgo: Miss Baldwin, Miss Ann Gardiner from the hospital, and myself. And it was drizzling rain.





I lugged the big coffee-pot, and we all had lunch-packs, and we set out down the road unconventional, happy and undaunted. "What if the president could see me now!" laughed the released Alice Mary.

After a few miles we came to a spring under a big poplar tree and there built a little fire and had a leisurely and smoke-flavored lunch. We weren't a bit discouraged at our fewness, and took it for granted that the next hike would be more popular (which it certainly was, with 40-some attending that one). On our way back it rained considerably, and we really looked like three drowned rats when we got back to campus. And again Alice Mary thought out loud--half in delight, half in fear--"Oh what if the president should see me now. . ."

That winter the walking club grew and grew. And all winter long, come snow or shine or sleet, some of us kept the faith in happy wholesome camaraderie and stretching our legs. By now we had organized our various chores, so that two couples were selected at each meeting to be "peggy" for the next; to make the fires, and get the cooking going; other teams to find interesting historical sites at which to gather, and so on. But before we realized the necessity of finding out whose land we were on, and getting permission, and inviting the owner to join us, we had one very weird experience.

On a brisk autumn evening when the leaves were falling, we were snugly settled in a little grassy clearing that had a heavy growth of spruce pines on one side. Some of the boys had brought their private steak grills, and were entertaining their favorite



girls at good meat-and-gravy suppers. Somebody was thrumming on a guitar, somebody else was humming along to it (we always had a lot of singing) and the rest were chewing on their "vittles" and putting out a comfortable hum of converse.

Now this was all before our explorer J. B. Rhine had become famous as the father of ESP--though he, along with Doctor McDougall and Doctor Lundholm, was a very skilful experimenter in hypnotism. Well, tonight, during a lull in the after-supper doings, some of the students had set up a plea to Doctor Rhine to hypnotize somebody. Then "Hypnotize me!" "Hypnotize me!" from several of the girls.

"It isn't exactly ethical", said our good, calm and obliging psychologist, "but I don't see any harm, way out here in the woods," and he got ready to operate. A girl named Patsy kept insisting on being the sacrificial victim, so he had her lie down on a hastily raked up bed of leaves, and with a flashlight as the object to stare at for his magic, began his incantation.

Soon afterward, when Patsy was well sunk in slumber, I happened to glance toward the dark thicket of pines and saw something awful and awesome.

"Do you see what I see?" I said sotto voce to Dean Justin Miller beside me. We both quickly rose, and also one of the School of Religion professors (it just might have been Dr. Mason Crum), and we all advanced toward the grizzled apparition that stood there with a long bush beard and a lantern, its eyes glowing with rancor and arousement like fire-coals. It was the





old farmer who owned the land who had seen the smoke from our fires and had come down to reconnoiter.

"Good evening, sir," said the smooth-talking man of law, extending the right hand of fellowship and a \$5 bill to the old curmudgeon. Who grabbed the money like a trout a fly. "Perhaps we are on your land, sir, with our little picnic, and should pay you something for the use of your grove."

The professor from Divinity offered the old fellow for a peace-offering a big chunk of devil's food cake he had just started munching on.

But our irate visitor said not a word, just glared.

We went on to explain away his fire fears, to dispel his all-too-apparent animosity for "city slickers"; but it was like talking to a stone on a stump. Then suddenly he exploded with: "Waal what's thet feller doin' to that woman?"

To his provincial and unscientific mind the psychological demonstration going on was plainly nothing less than a devilish rite of witchcraft.

At this juncture poor Doctor Rhine was working fast to bring Patsy back to consciousness. Back from out of the Nowhere into the Here. He was shaking her like a terrier with a rag doll--clapping his hands and commanding her to wake up! Wake up!

Well, after the excitement we all hastily packed up our packs, burnt the trash and put out the fire, and beat it.

But that was the last time our Explorers' Club ever trespassed. We set up a Committee for Negotiating with



Landlords--which also provided an opportunity for a couple of student couples to do some before-hand exploring on their own.

Our Explorers' Club was rich in all kinds of talent. Among our many fine singers, Allen Stanley and Walter Cutter stand out in my memory. I believe Allen was later in the professional choir at Rockefeller Center. There were several budding poets and other kinds of writers, and embryonic scientists. Jack Bryan, for one, later became a novelist and the last I heard of Don Correll he was way down in Peru, investigating wild potatoes for the U. S. Department of Agriculture. Peggy Long was a born biologist and also a very popular girl. We had several real funny comics--one who sticks in my recollection was a droll girl from Charleston who specialized in the Charlestonian lingo, and could make a monkey laugh with her skit about "Nize wite rice." And among the daring athletic ones were Ernie Winton, who loved to climb way up on power-house smokestacks and bravely wave down to us.

In the growth of our walking club we also made some friendly contacts outside the university circle. The city fire chief, Frank Bennett, was invited to one of the "explores", and with his jolly personality and Irish tenor voice, won himself an honorary degree in our un-academic organization. Also every now and then some odd surprises got on the program. One day I happened to meet a real true-blue tramp passing through Durham on his way West, and since he was a good walker and looked hungry, I arranged with him to go along with us to that day's explore. It so happened that the leading banker in the town was to also be



our guest that day--and what was more natural and amusing than to seat them together, side by side. And strange as it may seem, these opposites in the social and monetary scale got along famously. Both had a sense of humor and seemed to enjoy the unexpected drift of circumstances that had brought them to our festal board.

Then there was the time we cooked up a meeting between a world-famous psychologist and a magician. It was a bright sunny Saturday morning that our cars were all lined up to go out somewhere--it may have been out Buck Creek way. Dr. William McDougall, the imposing, wise and genial British expert on mind matters, who had written a couple of dozen books and had studied all kinds of people from lords and ladies to the headhunters of Borneo, was in his big red British auto with his wife Anne, waiting for others to ride with them. I brought him a man he had never seen, Wallace Lee the magician--and introduced him as Mr. Wallace Grant. After our cavalcade had gone a few miles out in the country, it was held up by the McDougall car, that was up in front, having stopped. On going to see what was the matter, we found some unusual and uncanny goings on. The Englishman had his tonneau open and he and the "Grant" man were peering into it excitedly. "Thur's a creetur in heer," the doctor said. "We distinctly heerd it cry for help, but though we've looked everywhere we find no trace of it. 'Tis most baffling."

This scene was repeated once or twice more before we arrived at our destination: the big car halting and all hands getting out to locate the fellow calling for help, and nobody to be found.





Then after lunch, as the McDougalls and their guest were sitting under a big oak, Mr. Grant asked to examine the pretty lace handkerchief, a precious heirloom, that Anne McDougall had in her hand. And when that lunatic Grant had it in his hand he suddenly took out his lighter and set it afire. Burned it to ashes and laughed about it, which, as you can imagine, shocked the sweet old English lady and really "burned her up." Then Grant rolled up his sleeve and out dropped the precious trophy, perfectly intact and resurrected, into Mrs. M's lap. Then and not until then, the great psychologist realized that he had been made the butt of a hoax and that his friend was not only a magician who could pull rabbits out of hats and coins out of the air or whiskers, but also a clever ventriloquist.

Another time, when Count Sforza, the very bald diplomat from Italy, visited Duke, Dean Miller brought him to an explore. One of the boys who was majoring in the Latin language undertook to converse with the famous and proud old descendent of Cortez. Which got a laugh--for in asking him to share his bag of potato chips, he had mistakenly invited him to play leapfrog.

One damp moonshiny night there was a possum hunt, led, as I recall by George Pearson and Janet Earl. We had arranged with an old Negro man on Little River, and his sons (and his hounds), for the affair, and when we got there the night of the hunt, they were all ready and ready to go. The dogs went baying and smelling eagerly in the damp leaves. There were nine possums, big and little, bagged that night, from under stumps and up trees, and the crowning part of the party was the jolly midnight



unwrapping of lunches around a fire in the weird and moonlit bottomland woods. I daresay George (now a yachtsman in St. Petersburg, Florida, and Janet (now Mrs. Cornwall Miller of Essex, Connecticut--with two grown daughters, all of whom have recently visited me in the Smoky Mountains of Tennessee) remember that vivid night if no one else does.

Another popular departure was our semi-annual long distance explore to the mountains in the autumn and to the seashore in the summer. To interesting spots such as Roanoke Island and Old Bath, down at the mouth of the Pamlico River, not far from Plum Island where Teach the Pirate ("Blackbeard") used to lurk.

...

Twenty-five years after leaving Duke and going to New York and then to the Smoky Mountains in Tennessee to live, I went back for a few days to do some research in its wonderful library--in the real heart of the old Tudor Gothic place. And there I met my old explorer friend and comrade Alice Mary, still courageously carrying on, though now retired. We spent an hour together talking old times, and she said that our Explorers' Club, that explored not only the woodland terrain, but also in the realms of history, natural history, the good life and human relations--and the memory of which she still cherished--had been one of Duke's best educational experiments.



## Appendix B

## THE VISION OF KING PAUCUS

## A One-Act Play in Three Scenes

## Characters

Boy: About eighteen years old, tall, well built, intelligent of countenance, a fine specimen of the younger generation.

Girl: About a year younger than the boy, her brother. She is pretty, alert, and eager for learning.

King Paucus: A thin, awkward man with a goatish beard. His eyes are dreamy, fringed with long curling lashes. He wears a black academic gown trimmed with vari-colored stripes. On his head is a crown of gold thorns which he is continually taking off and replacing.

Henri Rudolphus Fatpaunch: The King's eunuch and Lord of Ballyhoo, a man-sized infant with a head like a pumpkin and a croaking blah-blah voice. His eyes are beady, his face rat-like. His breath comes in short pants, but nevertheless he wears no pants, and is arrayed sometimes in the disguise of a fairy and at others a la Mahatma.

Prince Struttabout Blossoms: A self-important, sonorous say-nothing dressed in a curious suit of armour fashioned from coins. His shirt is made of greenbacks sewed together in a modish fashion and his necktie bears a Fifth Avenue label on the right side.

Lord Willie Wanna-be-King: A pasty sort of ham- and-egg man wearing an academic robe.

Markheim: Vassal to Prince Blossoms.

Retainers to Wanna-be-King: Arnold the Sheep, Weakfish the Herring, with chorus of yes-men.

Messengers.

Time: Early Fall





## Scene I

The boy and girl are wandering hand-in-hand through a forest of tall pines. They appear tired and bewildered, as though lost.

Girl: Won't we ever find our way? And food! I'm starving.

Boy: Oh, if we just keep looking, we'll find some eventually, I suppose. We ought to come upon a place soon now.

Girl: Oh, look! Look over there! Is it an ape, an ogre, or a monstrous fairy? See?

Boy: Sure enough. (They watch the approach of the eunuch, Lord of Ballyhoo, who, in the short pinafore of a 350-pound fairy, is doing a sprightly little dance as he gathers wild flowers. He is singing: "I'm full of hot air; I'm full of hot air." He appears not to notice them at first.) Pardon, sir, but could you direct us? We are lost and are tired and hungry. We are looking for a place which will feed our bodies and our minds for a while until we are ready to go out into the world.

Lord of Ballyhoo: Certainly, certainly. That's what the Office of Ballyhooing Public Relations is for. This here's a great forest now, ain't it? Our forest is five thousand acres, I would have you know. And have you seen Prince Struttabout Blossoms's new \$90,000 palace? It was built for the prince when the common people were starving. That's the way we do things here in the Court of Learning. That's the Court that's in this forest that you're lost in, you know. Well, we always have plenty here while others starve. Say, you know, it must be mighty uncomfortable to starve. Personally, I'd feel mighty queer without my ten square meals a day. But, come along now to the Court. Come along to the Court. There you will find a two hundred and forty foot Gothic spectacle with a magnificent dias [sic] at the foot of it covered with gold and jewels for the inner court. Why, that Court of Learning ought to be good, my dear people, it ought to be good. Why, it cost three million bucks! Three million of Buck's best bucks for the tower alone, do you hear? Three million, three million tobacco stained, powerfully earned simoleons! (Scowls angrily.) Well, why don't you enthuse?

Girl: (Whispering to the boy.) Let's go. He frightens me. I'm sure he's an ogre. Did you see the way he gobbled down that box of chocolates he carried on his hip?

Boy: Shhh! This sounds good. They probably have grand food.

Lord of Ballyhoo: And, let me tell you, an eighteen thousand dollar football coach makes daily trips around the dias in an eternal search for a rose bowl in which to arrange his flowers of Southern manhood. Eighteen thousand dollars? Say, that's only



the beginning. We play football. Why, each player gets twenty dollars a Sunday for ushering in the Court. And you ain't seen nothin' til you've seen the stadium. And thousands of dollars more go to keeping up the track. If I can only pull Cousin Cigaretticus Reynold's leg and get some more millions maybe we can have two stadiums and two Courts with bells and get ahead of Carolina thataway. Boy, you look husky. Maybe I can get you a football scholarship. But come along to the Court, both of you, and mind you, look enthusiastic while I tell you what a wonderful place it is. (Scowls again more fiercely than ever, turning alternately red and purple in his face.) Come on. (The girl hangs back, afraid.) Oh, come on, girl, we need girls with looks like yours. You might do for a beauty contest. Say, that's not a bad educational ballyhoo idea, is it? "Great Co-ed Beauty Contest in Behalf of Higher Education."

Girl: But sir, do you have food for us? We've come a long way and we are getting awfully hungry.

Lord of Ballyhoo: Now, look here, didn't I say I'd attend to that? (Scowls again.) If you can't be more respectful, I won't play. (Pouts.) I don't see (aside) why everybody can't do like I say and not be so perverse. (Brightens.) Oh, yes, you'll get food and drink all right, but no beer. Absolutely no beer! That's a cardinal Methodist sin, beer drinking is, and King Paucus wouldn't like it. Food? Why, millions have been spent to take care of that. We have the lightest and airiest of dining rooms with the most expensive instructors, blackboards, and tablecloths available. Why, some of our butlers are even imported!

Girl: That sounds fine; but could I see a menu of the courses you have to offer?

Lord of Ballyhoo: Why, what's that?

Girl: Well, a sort of catalogue.

Lord of Ballyhoo: Oh, you want a catalogue? Catalogue, you say? Catalogue. Oh, catalogue. Yes, yes, I specialize on catalogues. But you don't need a catalogue. Here's pictures. You'd better come because we have a mediaeval feast, Gothic in fact. Then, you'll like the Maypole dance in the spring. It's one of our best educational features.

Boy: But, sir, do we get food? We want real food, food suitable for twentieth century youth.

Lord of Ballyhoo: Oh, yes, finest obtainable. Good football men are in charge of the dining rooms. (Sighs.) Oh, but if we could only do away with the students, what a place this would be! The students, the students! They drive me crazy! Always playing the piano in the lobby of the Union Palace and not treating me with the proper respect due my office as Ballyhooer of Public





Relations. (Turns to boy and girl, who are still looking at the pictures.) You've looked at them pictures long enough. Come along with me now. (They meet Prince Struttabout Blossoms coming along a path.)

Prince Blossoms: Well, well, Henri, picked up some new ones?

Lord of Ballyhoo: (Grumbling.) Yes, yes, some new ones. They want food. Always with their eyes looking toward food. Disgusting, I say.

Prince Blossoms: Well, well, you can't expect much more nowadays. (To the boy and girl.) Well, I can promise you-all anything you want. But wait until you show them our grass, Henri! It ought to be good. We've put a lot of manure on it. Wait a minute, I'd like you to know just how much. (The Prince calls his vassal, Markheim, who appears quickly bearing the records.)

Markheim: Here they are, your majesty.

Prince Blossoms: Well, give us the facts on the manure. You're fine, all of them with you as usual?

Markheim: Yes, your majesty. Forty-eight thousand loads as of September 16, noon, Prince. There was 19,856 loads of horse, 26,224 1/2 of cow, besides . . .

Prince Blossoms: You see, I'm a practical man, and we have a fine financial system.

Boy and Girl: Oh, tell us about the Hospital Scandal, won't you? We'd find it much more interesting than your manure bill.

Prince Blossoms and Lord Ballyhoo: Scandal? Pooh, pooh, there never has been any scandal. Don't know what you're talking about. Dr. Amoss resigned because he found that everything Dean Davidson [sic] did was so perfectly ethical. He just couldn't stand it.

Lord Ballyhoo: (Aside.) Why will people doubt our rationalized news in the daily press?

Ghost of the Hospital Scandal: (Appearing in a gust of wind.) Ooooooooo! Ooooooooo! (The Prince and Lord Ballyhoo shiver with dread.)

Prince Blossoms: (Running about excitedly.) There he goes, Henri! Lasso him! Lasso him! Oh, he's going! he's going! We've got to catch that terrible ghost, Henri, and put him in a box. We're never safe from Time Magazine and Josephus Daniels as long as he's loose.

Lord Ballyhoo: (Swatting crazily.) There's those pesky ideas hitting me again, or trying to! Help me swat 'em, quick! One



hit me forty years ago and I've never gotten over it. Get them! We need an office for the swatting of ideas around here, that's what!

Prince Blossoms: Well the King just made me Custodian of the Faculty Muzzles.

## SCENE II

The boy and girl are standing hand-in-hand before a magnificent tower of gold and jewels. At the foot of it is a courtyard with a dias at the center-back. It is filled with people. On the dias King Paucus is seated, wearing his elaborate robes, surrounded by several academic pooh-bahs. Behind him stand the Lord of Ballyhoo, this time in his office of Eunuch, slowly fanning the King with an Alumni Register. Above that, in the center, hangs an oil portrait of a huge, coarse looking man with a wad of tobacco in one cheek. He is gaudily dressed and has shrewd eyes and grasping hands. Candles are burning under the painting. At the left-front stands Prince Struttabout Blossoms, unctuously shaking the hands and patting the backs of richly clad persons as they saunter across the stage. Occasionally a poorly dressed person is seen to pass, but is always ignored. On the right-front stands Willie Wanna-Be King, with the boy and girl. He is attended by Arnold the Sheep and Weakfish the Herring.

Wanna-be-King: This, young gentleman and young woman, is the great Court built in the wide open out-of-doors from which you can see as many trees as you could want. Millions of dollars have gone into this Court. It's the greatest in the world. Take that tower there; you'll never see another like it. And all this was created by the Duke, the greatest man that ever lived. Know what he said to me once? He said, "Wanna-be-King, let me give you some advice. Never let anybody decide anything for themselves. Strut your stuff and make a lot of noise and you'll fool some of the people some of the time, even if your little peanut brains do rattle rather noticeably. You remember that and maybe you'll get to be King some day while the Board of Trustees is asleep or rubbing its rheumatism." And do you know, I've always remembered that advice and kept it, and I've never been in any scrapes. Oh, I know my stuff. Now before he was knighted, old Struttabout Blossoms was only a common math professor, but I was a Herr German Doctor from Heidelberg, I'd have you know. It was I who put in the goose step system.

Girl: But, sir, the food, where is it?

Wanna-be-King: Oh, that's all prescribed for you. But let me tell you . . .

Girl: (Disappointedly.) I know, but, I--I--I wanted to choose.





Wanna-be-King: Tut, tut, young woman, you're too young to choose. You'll have to learn my goose step system if you stay here. But let me tell you, there's one thing that Blossoms and I agree on, and that is that Duke was the greatest philanthropist that ever lived. (Bows three times to the image of Saint Buck Duke.) Think of building an institution like this for me and my goose step! And letting me boss the professors and students! Wonderful! (Struts and tries to look big.) You ought to be proud of being here. It's magnificent! It's a great privilege. In a few minutes now the bells will ring. We have the finest bells that there are in this kingdom right here. Yes, sir! And the tower windows are larger and more beautiful than any to be found. I want you people to go often to the tower. You must. And, you must do all the other things I shall command of you. Why? Because I say so, of course. You two just wait here while I go make arrangements for your meeting with the Coach. And, mind you, don't use the chairs; young people are not supposed to be comfortable around here. (He leaves the boy and girl standing.)

Boy: Shhh! I think I hear a football game going on and some yelling!

Girl: Oh, how wonderful! Say, do you know this place really is more beautiful than those pictures, isn't it? I didn't expect that, did you?

Boy: No, I didn't. But say, have you noticed the ugly picture they worship? Looks queer in these surroundings, doesn't it?

Girl: Shhh! They might hear you. They are sort of funny here, though. When do we get our food? I haven't seen any. And, do you know, he says we can't choose our own! That's queer!

Boy: I could eat anything now. But here comes Wanna-be-King again.

Wanna-be-King: Come on, boy.

Boy: But I can't leave her. She can come, too, can't she?

Wanna-Be-King: On, no, no, no. Women have to learn their places here. We can't take her along. Men can't entertain women anyway. I must teach you of the younger generation that boys and girls should not mix. Sin, sin, that's it! You must remember that women and beer are the terrible Original Sin! Here, I'll take her over to King Paucus. He always takes care of the women. He can show her the tower or something. (He takes her to the King, who bows low before her, doffing his crown and rising from his rocking chair. Wanna-be-King leaves with the boy.)

King Paucus: Howdy, madam. We certainly are glad to have you all here. (Turns aside to whistle a short tune.) This place was built for you and we hope that you'll get a deal of inspiration





from it. (Removes and replaces crown twice; scratches head five times and scratches left ear six times.)

(A procession of professors and students in chains passes by.)

Girl: Who are those poor people in chains?

King Paucus: Pooh, pooh. Only some of those terrible radicals who wouldn't conform to our rules and regulations. That girl with the ball and chain is our worst criminal. She was out after ten-thirty twice. Why can't they remember that this is a factory? An educational factory in which they are just laborers and not supposed to have opinions. This is my Court and nobody else has anything to do with it. I can't see why in the world people won't follow our vision or go out and start a court for themselves. Here I've been years pulling wires with the Duke's family and the Methodist Church to get this expensive Court together, and here these fanatical students and professors dare suggest ideas to me! The very idea! As if I were interested in ideas! But more important, young woman, have you heard the bells? You haven't? Well, I'll see that you do.

Girl: Thank you, your royal academic majesty.

King Paucus: Listen closely now. They'll ring in just a few minutes when the ceremony begins. Ah, I see you have been noticing the tower windows.

Girl: Yes, they are very beautiful.

King Paucus: Those windows are truly masterpieces, and there are seven thousand pipes in the organ. Did you know that? Every day I mount that tower and go among the bells for meditation. My dear young woman, I want you to feel free to go up there at any time and rest your soul in peace and repose. Pray to Midas, the All Powerful, for help and guidance. I must make a speech about that to the Alumni Association sometime.

Girl: Would you please tell me something? I'd like to know very much when and where my brother and I will get food, because we are both very hungry and . . .

King Paucus: Yes, yes, but that will all be . . . That reminds me, Henri, is my daily ballyhoo ready?

Henry the Eunuch: (Fatuously.) Yes, my lord King. (Produces copy for Alumni Register, daily papers, radio and television.)

King Paucus: (In a whisper.) And, Henri, have you rationalized that last building blunder of mine and told the public what a great vision is mine once more?

Henri the Eunuch: (Impatiently.) Yes, yes, milord.



King Paucus: And one thing more, Henri, I am cutting all salaries--excepting those of the Big Four, of course--and from now on, we'll cut out the useless expenses of laboratories and libraries. Remind me to call a meeting so we can go into a proper huddle to discuss the situations. In case the student body and the public might not like it, put out some good publicity on, "King Paucus, Man of Visions, is carrying the Court of Learning onward to greater, vaster outlook!" And, Henri, remind me to have Lord Wanna-be-King tighten the controls on those Student Government Clubs, but quietly, quietly! They still think they are important! (Laughs.)

(A messenger boy approaches with a note for the King in a silver dish.)

Messenger: Your majesty, from your most faithful and humble servant, Lord Willie Wanna-be-King.

King Paucus: (Reading it.) Ah, it is now time for the ceremony. The bells will ring. (The girl goes to one side and sits down for the first time since her arrival. She is obviously much relieved. Lord Ballyhoo, the Eunuch, ceases his fanning and pulls a long silken cord, immediately after which two servant boys enter, one bearing a baptismal bowl of water and the other a heavily embroidered linen towel. The bells start ringing as the Eunuch bends over the King's beard with a magnifying glass. The girl watches with increasing amazement and the Eunuch finally speaks.)

Eunuch: Adolphus, Adolphus, come forth! (He plucks from the King's beard a flea which he holds by a tiny gold chain. He immerses it in the baptismal bowl and lays it tenderly on the linen towel before carefully replacing it. Throughout the entire ceremony everyone in the Court preserves a dignified silence. The King then kneels on the floor with his hands cupped under the bowl and his eyes directed toward the portrait of the Duke. His beard stands out horizontally. A gleam of light catches in the gold of Adolphus's chain. At this point the boy returns much exhausted.)

Boy: (To the girl.) Have you been fed yet?

Girl: No, and you?

Boy: They worked me to death, but no food. I saw one of the imported butlers, though. Or at least I think that's who he was, because he was carrying books. But say, what on earth is the King doing?

Court Attendant: Shhh! He's waiting for pink snow to fall into the font. There's an oracle that when pink snow falls into the font and elephants roost in trees, he is to receive the vision for which he has been waiting all his life.





King Paucus: (Slowly and majestically.) This is intended to be a frankly personal talk to thee, thou founder of this great Court! (Balances bowl in one hand while he drags Adolphus back and forth through his beard several times.) I hope that it will, therefore, not be inappropriate for me to plead that as day after day and year after year (removes and replaces crown) I confront the difficulties, disappointments and misunderstandings incident to the launching of a large new project like this Court. (Plays with Adolphus.) The prayer I feel most like uttering to thee, O Duke, thou greatest Apostle of Midas, is (removes and replaces crown): Give me patience, patience, I need, O Duke! (He remains in this position as flakes of white (not pink) snow fall from above and cover his beard.)

(At this point the bells ring out loudly and clearly and the entire company bursts into a Hallelujah.) King Paucus, Prince Blossoms, the Eunuch and Little Willie Wanna-be-King kneel on a ten-thousand dollar Oriental prayer rug:

Glory be to Buck Duke in the Highest,  
 Glory be to the Virgin Dollars we are salting down for our  
     old age!  
 Glory be to the Holy Spirit of the Ballyhoo that enables us  
     to keep the American Public in the dark and the  
     N.R.A. outside the palace walls of Dukeus  
     Universitat, both now and, we hope, forever more!

Ah-man!

### Scene III

The scene is the same as the first, in the woods. The boy and the girl are leaning upon each other in utter weariness as they are walking slowly away from the Court of Learning. In the distance the sound of bells is heard playing, "Dear Old Duke." The pinched faces of the couple look slowly up and back toward the bells just once, their heads drop, and they stumble on until their fatigue overtakes them and they sink to the ground.

CURTAIN





## Abbreviations

WPF	Papers of William Preston Few
RLF	Papers of Robert Lee Flowers
ES	Papers of Ernest Seeman, University Archives, Duke University
Recollections	Taped interview, Ernest Seeman with Mimi Conway. Southern Oral History Collection, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
Seeman Collection	Fifteen boxes of unprocessed material in Southern Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
Square Peg	Essay, "The Adventures of a Square Peg." Box 3, Seeman Collection.
JAT	Papers of James A. Thomas, Manuscript Department, Duke University Library



## Notes

## Introduction

<sup>1</sup> Photograph album of Explorers' Club hikes, beginning February 14, 1932 to September 7, 1939, assembled by Exie Duncan of the Duke Press. Records of Explorers' Club, University Archives, Duke University.

<sup>2</sup> Ernest Seeman, "Recollections of the Explorers' Club. Recorded in April, 1971, in his Eighty-third year," Journal of the Association for the Preservation of the Eno River Valley, Inc. 4, no. 1 (Spring 1976): 12.

<sup>3</sup> [Janet Earl Miller], "The Vision of King Paucus." (privately printed, October 1933).

<sup>4</sup> Jay M. Steinberg, "Up Tumblin' Creek," The Tennessee Conservationist 36, no. 8 (August 1970): 8. Published monthly by the Tennessee Department of Conservation, and the Tennessee Game and Fish Commission.

<sup>5</sup> Ernest Seeman, letters to the author, January 3, 1971, January 7, 1971, March 24, 1971.

<sup>6</sup> Ernest Seeman, American Gold (New York: The Dial Press, 1978).

<sup>7</sup> Ernest Seeman, interview with Mimi Conway, recorded at Hermitage Nursing Home, Elizabethton, Tennessee, February 13, 1976, 4007 (B-12), 30 (hereafter cited as Recollections). Southern Oral History Collection, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, N.C. Conway is a





free-lance journalist, currently working in Washington, D.C. In 1976, while living in Tennessee, she was asked to visit the Seemans to gather oral history as part of a University of North Carolina program.

<sup>8</sup> Robert F. Durden, The Dukes of Durham, 1865-1929 (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1975), 229.

<sup>9</sup> Recollections, 42.

# I. "Square Peg"

<sup>1</sup> William Kenneth Boyd, The Story of Durham--City of the New South (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1925), 253.

<sup>2</sup> Boyd, Story of Durham, 255.

<sup>3</sup> Recollections, 11. According to Ernest, his father was a victim of industrial poisoning, the result of a technique he had devised to print Bull Durham labels. To make the labels shine like gold, he dipped the piece of a carton into a tray of bronze. The damage to his lungs from the exposure to the bronze caused his death in 1917.

<sup>4</sup> Durden, Dukes of Durham, 104.

<sup>5</sup> Recollections, 20-23.

<sup>6</sup> Boyd, Story of Durham, 256.

<sup>7</sup> Ernest Seeman, "The Adventures of a Square Peg."

Submitted for publication to George Lawrence Andrews, Raleigh, N.C., 2 (hereafter cited as Square Peg). Internal clues indicate that it was written early in Seeman's tenure at the Duke Press. Seeman Collection, 4031, Box 3 (hereafter cited as Seeman



Collection). Unprocessed papers of Ernest Seeman, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. In August 1978 Carolyn Wallace, Curator of the Southern Historical Collection, brought from Tumblin' Creek, Erwin, Tennessee, where the Seemans had lived since the early 1940s, 14 boxes of material--manuscripts, letters, clippings. Mimi Conway, with Jacquelyn Hall of the Oral History Project, had asked that the material be placed in the collection and held, since she intended to write a book about Seeman. For three years the papers were not available to others, but apparently Conway changed her plans because the papers were released. In March 1985 Conway sent to the collection a 15th box, largely manuscripts of American Gold, "The Bull and the Thrush," "Grasshopper Farm," and other Seeman writings.

<sup>8</sup> Recollections, 1.

<sup>9</sup> Interview with Julia Albright, Durham, North Carolina, May 1, 1979. Ernest's mother, Betty Albright, was the sister of Julia's father.

<sup>10</sup> Recollections, 7.

<sup>11</sup> In Square Peg, and in transcripts of interviews with Seeman by Mimi Conway, Seeman described his childhood. Slight discrepancies occur in the stories but the general impression from both is consistent. The discrepancies may be attributed to an age factor: he wrote the former sometime between ages thirty-seven and forty-seven and the latter interviews were recollections at age eighty-nine. The former carries the



initialed handwritten note from Andrews: "Friend of mine whose writing I market, Manager of the Duke Press. 6,000 words submitted at your usual rate."

On page 1 of the essay he said that he wrote the essay to encourage people "looked upon as failures who are merely stuck temporarily in vocational grooves for which their personalities are unfit." He continued: "It may put heart into some of these persons who chance to read these lines and inspire them . . . to a better understanding and adjustment of their talents" and those of their children. He described his own floundering childhood, his wanderings, his various occupations and his ultimate appointment to the Duke Press, where he "had found at last the master door, my vocational destiny. My problem of versatility has ended in the haven of an all absorbing purpose." The essay appeared to be directed toward entertaining as well as toward encouraging the "square pegs," but the dramatic style of his story causes the reader to question some facts reported there. For example, packed between his working in his father's printery from age thirteen and his travelling, he continued to attend school "to within a month of diploma."

<sup>12</sup> Recollections, 7, 34; interview with Albright.

<sup>13</sup> "News from the Dial Press," a division of Dell Publishing Company, New York, N.Y., April 14, 1978.

<sup>14</sup> Ernest Seeman, "Square Pegs: Some Thoughts on the Prevention and Salvage of Vocational Misfits Addressed to Young People, Parents, Employers and the Misfit," copyright 1929, no





pagination. Seeman wrote an essay with a similar theme, "The Hand of Education in the South, A Program of Broad Objectives Proposed for the Orientation of Education in the Southern States Along Lines Compatible With Geographic Need and the Ideals of a Planned Society," addressed to The Educational Committee, and Hon. Hugh Macrae, president of the Southeastern Council in 1933 (?), 1-9, 32-37, Collection of North Caroliana, The Library of the University of North Carolina.

<sup>15</sup> Seeman, Square Peg, 14.

<sup>16</sup> Seeman, Square Peg, 11; interview with Albright.

<sup>17</sup> Picture of Ernest Seeman with the Durham Orchestra (1904 or 1905), front row, first person left, Joel and Frank Kostyu, A Pictorial History of Durham (Norfolk, Virginia: The Donning Company, 1978), 152.

<sup>18</sup> Seeman, Square Peg, 10, Seeman Collection, Box 15. In a letter The Progressive Farmer, Raleigh, rejected the article, n.d.

<sup>19</sup> Recollections, 50; Ernest Seeman, "Samuel Langley as I Knew Him," The South Atlantic Quarterly, 26 (January-October 1928): 202-14.

<sup>20</sup> Seeman, "Square Peg, 13; William Seeman, Down Goose Creek. Being a Ten-Year Old Boy's Account of a Journey by Stream and Swamp from Carolina Foothills to the Sea, illustrated by the author and Watts Fowler (New York, London, Edinburg: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1931). Down Goose Creek written by Ernest Seeman's son, Bill, when he was ten, tells of Ernest's



promise to his then nine-year-old son that if Bill would find the head waters of Goose Creek, together they would take a canoe trip from Goose Creek to the Neuse River and on to the Pamlico Sound and the Neuse's entrance into the Atlantic Ocean. Ernest had taught his son camping techniques, woods lore and history. As Bill tells of their adventures it is evident that he had a very close, admiring and loving relationship with his father. In the "Foreword to Parents," William Seeman's father tells of his theory of child-rearing: "The child whose talent is nurtured in early years through exercise and inspirational guidance will reach adolescence a hundred-fold more alert and creative than his fellows. . . . Stimulating environments and the opportunity for self-expression with a rich background of good reading" will allow children to express themselves and develop all their potential. The charming Down Goose Creek indicates that Seeman was very successful in rearing a child who was growing up with such a background as Seeman felt was the inalienable birthright of every child with normal intelligence and latent talent.

<sup>21</sup> Who's Who in America, 1934-1935 ed., s.v. "Ernest Seeman."

<sup>22</sup> On December 27, 1919, at Durham, Seeman married Julia A. Henry, one of three daughters of successful businessman and socially prominent William P. Henry, of Durham. (Marriage Register, Office of Register of Deeds, Durham County, N.C., (1919-1928), 108. Recollections tell of Seeman's marriage and his wife's family, 13, 27, 32.





<sup>23</sup> Elizabeth Seeman interview with Mimi Conway, recorded at Tumblin' Creek, Erwin, Tennessee, February 19, 1976, 4007 (G 55), 41. Southern Oral History Collection, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, N.C.

<sup>24</sup> Who's Who in America, 1934-1935 ed., s.v. "Ernest Seeman."

<sup>25</sup> Recollections, 34. The "socially inclined" comment had reference to Seeman's wife's materialistic family and his efforts to win their approval.

<sup>26</sup> Recollections, 34.

<sup>27</sup> Mark Pinsky, "American Gold: 40-Year Old Novel," Raleigh News and Observer, April 9, 1978, 6-IV.

<sup>28</sup> Mimi Conway, "A Redhot Poker and Rattlesnake Juice: A Profile of Ernest Seeman," Southern Exposure 6, no. 2 (Summer 1978): 117-21.

<sup>29</sup> Seeman, Square Peg, 21.

<sup>30</sup> Seeman, Square Peg, 22.

<sup>31</sup> Seeman, Square Peg, 2.

<sup>32</sup> Seeman, Square Peg, 24.

## II. A Place for a Square Peg

<sup>1</sup> Ernest Seeman, "Ten Years in a Liberal College by an Ex-Employee," n.d. (information in the essay indicates it was probably written in the spring of 1935). Seeman Collection, Box 15.



<sup>2</sup> "History of Duke University Press," unsigned and undated with a note by Exie Duncan written July, 1974: "The foregoing coverage of the Duke University Press, though not dated, must have been written in the late 1950's, but I am not able to get a positive date." Records of the Duke University Press, University Archives, Duke University.

<sup>3</sup> William B. Hamilton, ed., "Fifty Years of The South Atlantic Quarterly," The South Atlantic Quarterly 2 (October 1903): 297-305.

<sup>4</sup> Earl W. Porter, Trinity and Duke, 1892-1924: Foundations of Duke University (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1964), 118.

<sup>5</sup> Robert H. Woody, ed., The Papers and Addresses of William Preston Few, (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1951), 173-85.

<sup>6</sup> Seeman to Robert Lee Flowers, vice-president of Duke University in the Business Division, secretary and treasurer, October 20, 1926. Office of the Vice-President, papers of Robert L. Flowers, University Archives, Duke University (hereafter cited as RLF).

<sup>7</sup> Seeman to Flowers, February 9, 1927, RLF.

<sup>8</sup> Seeman to Flowers, April 2, 1927, RLF.

<sup>9</sup> Annual Catalogue of Duke University, 1925-26, 28, and 1926-27, 36, "Louis Tappe Ibbotson, Reference Librarian."

<sup>10</sup> Seeman to Flowers, April 2, 1927, RLF.

<sup>11</sup> Seeman to Flowers, August 17, 1927, RLF.



12 Seeman to The Press Committee, % Flowers, January 18, 1928, RLF.

13 James A. Thomas, A Pioneer Tobacco Merchant in the Orient (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1928), 4.

14 Porter, Trinity and Duke, 188.

15 Durden, Dukes of Durham, 14.

16 Seeman to James A. Thomas, July 2, 1927; Seeman to Flowers, July 5, 1927, RLF.

17 James A. Thomas, Trailing Trade a Million Miles (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1931).

18 Interview with Dan Ross, marketing manager, Duke Press, January 13, 1987.

19 Thomas to W. K. Boyd, professor of history, Duke University and editor of the Duke University Press, July 14, 1927, James A. Thomas Papers, Manuscript Department, Duke University Library, Durham, North Carolina (hereafter cited as JAT).

20 Thomas contract with Duke Press, August 8, 1928, JAT.

21 Thomas to Seeman, July 30, 1927, JAT.

22 Seeman to Thomas, March 6, 1928, JAT.

23 Thomas to Seeman, February 24, 1928; Flowers to Thomas, April 4, 1928 and April 12, 1928, RLF.

24 A story in the Alumni Register of Duke University, 14, no. 3 (March 1928): 89-90 suggested the closeness of Thomas and Seeman. When Thomas came to Durham to lay flowers at the Duke family mausoleum it reported: "Mr. Thomas arrived in Durham





yesterday afternoon and was greeted by his friend Ernest Seeman and others." The story continued with an account of Few and Flowers conducting the visitor over the site of the new buildings on the West Campus; Seeman to Thomas, April 4, 1928, JAT. In a letter to Thomas, August 1, 1928, Seeman stated that he was going to write to the publishers of Who's Who in America, asking them to "put you there where you belong." JAT.

<sup>25</sup> Seeman to Flowers, September 18, 1928; Thomas to Seeman, October 2, 1928, RLF.

<sup>26</sup> Durden, Dukes of Durham, 256, 259.

<sup>27</sup> J. Fred Rippey, professor of history, Duke University, to Flowers, February 4, 1931, RLF.

<sup>28</sup> Seeman to Thomas, December 7, 1931, RLF.

<sup>29</sup> Seeman to The Press Committee, % Flowers, January 18, 1928, RLF.

<sup>30</sup> Seeman to Flowers, February 20, 1928, RLF.

<sup>31</sup> Seeman to Flowers, May 25, 1928, RLF.

<sup>32</sup> Seeman to Flowers, May 25, 1928, RLF.

<sup>33</sup> Seeman (2) to Flowers, May 25, 1928, RLF.

<sup>34</sup> Paull F. Baum, professor of English, Duke University, to Wilburt C. Davison, dean of Duke University Medical School, July 9, 1929; Davison to Flowers, July 18, 1928, with enclosures. RLF.

<sup>35</sup> Seeman to Flowers, August 18, 1928, RLF.

<sup>36</sup> Seeman to Flowers, January 17, 1929, RLF.

<sup>37</sup> Seeman to Flowers, January 18, 1929, RLF.



<sup>38</sup> Seeman to Boyd, December 10, 13, 18 and 19(2), 1929; Boyd to Seeman December 13, 18, 1929; Boyd to Flowers, December 19, 1929, RLF.

<sup>39</sup> Flowers to G. G. Allen, chairman of the Duke Endowment, November 16, 1933, RLF.

<sup>40</sup> Randolph G. Adams, William L. Clements Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, to Flowers, September 19, 1931, RLF.

<sup>41</sup> Flowers to Adams, October 22, 1931, RLF.

<sup>42</sup> Wilhelmina Isenhour, Duke University Appointments Office, to J. L. Raulston, director, Bureau of Appointments, University of Tennessee, answering his inquiry about Duke's Appointments Office, July 13, 1933, RLF.

<sup>43</sup> Exie Duncan, "My Recollections of the Duke University Press From the Time I Went to Work There April 11, 1932," 1, Records of the Duke University Press, University Archives, Duke University (hereafter cited as Duncan, "My Recollections").

<sup>44</sup> Henry R. Dwire, "The Duke University Press, to the President of the University," Bulletin of Duke University 4, no. 4 (April 1932): 123-26.

<sup>45</sup> Duncan, "My Recollections," 1.

### III. The Idealist

<sup>1</sup> Carolyne Shooter Kyles, letters to author, November 30, 1986, February 14, 1987.

<sup>2</sup> Exie Duncan, "My Recollections," 2.

<sup>3</sup> Seeman, Recollections of the Explorers' Club.





<sup>4</sup> Porter, Trinity and Duke, 63.

<sup>5</sup> "Smoking," Handbook for Women Students, Duke University, published by Woman's College Government, sponsored by Young Women's Christian Association, for members of the freshman class, 1931-32, 69-70.

<sup>6</sup> Ernest Seeman, "Ten Years in a Liberal College by an Ex-Employee," 1, Seeman Collection, Box 15. Seeman stated in this essay that "our impractical vice-president [Soper] was encouraged to migrate." Evidence indicates that this is untrue. Few was unhappy at Soper's resignation two years after he arrived at Duke. The two exchanged cordial letters after the dean left, however, and, when Soper was inaugurated as president of Ohio Wesleyan University (Soper to Few, December 20, 1928, WPF) Few was presented with a Doctor of Laws degree.

<sup>7</sup> Harold Scott, First Unitarian Society, Salt Lake City, to Seeman: "In my opinion, atheism, which you say you embrace, etc," February 3, 1958, Papers of Ernest Seeman, University Archives, Duke University, (hereafter cited as ES).

<sup>8</sup> "Poteat to be Speaker Thursday at Disarmament Meeting to be Held in Auditorium at Duke University," Durham Morning Herald, February 8, 1928; "Big Navy Plans Flayed Here by Noted Educator," Durham Morning Herald, February 10, 1928, 1, col. 7.

<sup>9</sup> William Louis Poteat to Few, January 6, 1926, August 23, 1926; Few to Poteat, January 13, 1926, August 4, 1926, WPF.

<sup>10</sup> Soper to Few, June 12, 1926, WPF.



<sup>11</sup> Petition of the junior class to W. H. Wannamaker, vice-president in the Educational Division and dean of the university, n.d., WPF.

<sup>12</sup> Wannamaker to W. A. Finley, chairman, special committee of the junior class, December 2, 1926, WPF.

<sup>13</sup> Few to the Reverend Mr. W. W. Peele, Durham, the Reverend Mr. M. T. Plyler, Raleigh, and the Reverend Mr. W. A. Stanbury, Raleigh, March 1, 1927, WPF.

<sup>14</sup> Plyler to Few, February 24, 1927, WPF.

<sup>15</sup> Stanbury to Few, March 11, 1927, WPF.

<sup>16</sup> Peele to Few, March 5, 1927, WPF.

<sup>17</sup> Few to the Reverend Mr. H. M. North, March 23, 1927, WPF.

<sup>18</sup> "Report of the Committee for Investigation and Recommendation on Student Affairs," March 8, 1934, Trinity College, Duke University. Student Rebellion Collection, University Archives, Duke University.

<sup>19</sup> W. E. Whitford to Flowers, March 15, 1934, RLF.

<sup>20</sup> J. Foster Barnes, director, Social and Religious Activities, Duke University, to Soper, "Outline of Suggested Social Program for Duke University, 1928-29," August 22, 1928, WPF.

<sup>21</sup> Who's Who in America, 1934-35 ed., s.v. "Ernest Seeman."

<sup>22</sup> Seeman to Frank Porter Graham, president, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, November 13, 1931, Papers of Frank Porter Graham, 1819, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.



<sup>23</sup> Nicholas Murray Butler to Flowers, October 21, 1932, RLF.

<sup>24</sup> Edgar S. Brightman, department of philosophy, Boston University, to Soper, June 18, 1926; Albert C. Knudson, dean, Boston University School of Theology, to Soper, June 18, 1926; L. A. Weigle, Divinity School, Yale University, to Soper, June 18, 1926; William D. McDougall, to Few, September 1, 1926; McDougall to Few, telegram, October 6, 1926, WPF.

<sup>25</sup> Seeman to Graham, August 8, 1934, Papers of Frank Porter Graham, 1819, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

<sup>26</sup> Other published works by Seeman are: "Since Gutenberg," three part article, Publishers' Weekly 113, no. 14 (April 7, 1928): 1547-55; 113, no. 18 (May 5, 1928), 1879-83; 113, no. 22 (June 2, 1928), 2309-12; "Samuel Langley as I Knew Him," The South Atlantic Quarterly 27, (January-October 1928): 202-14; "A Catalogue of the Birds of Durham County," reprinted with additional notes from the Journal of the Elisha Mitchell Scientific Society (November 1929): 150-70, Collection of North Caroliana, The Library of the University of North Carolina; "Bird Life in the Duke Forest Provides an Interesting Study," Duke University Alumni Register 17, no. 5 (May 1931): 152-53; "Black Genius," The Commonweal 16, no. 2, (May 11, 1932): 37-39.

<sup>27</sup> Thomas to Flowers, December 31, 1928, RLF.

<sup>28</sup> Flowers to Thomas, January 3, 1929, RLF.

<sup>29</sup> Seeman to Flowers, January 4, 1929, RLF.





<sup>30</sup> The evidence sometimes suggests that Seeman appeared to feel that any contact with a person, no matter how casual, established a friendship. Given his interest in famous people, his attitude in this regard makes difficult the evaluation of how well he really knew a person. Neither Seeman's name nor that of the women named by him were found in a cursory examination of three biographies of Edison [Ronald W. Clark, Edison: The Man Who Made the Future (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1977, 232-33; Robert Conot, A Streak of Luck (New York: Seaview Books, 1979), 428-30; and Wyn Wachhorst, Thomas Alva Edison, An American Myth (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1981), 144-49]. All of these books relate the inventor's interest in devising "intelligence questionnaires" to be completed by applicants for jobs in his laboratories and factories. Details of the tests show that they emphasized the themes of self-education, the superiority of doers over thinkers, and the concrete over the abstract, all themes that Seeman propounded.

<sup>31</sup> J. H. Reynolds for Dr. Kearne, president of Hendrix College, Conway, Arkansas, to Few, January 16, 1926, WPF.

<sup>32</sup> Graham to Few, May 5, 1931, WPF.

<sup>33</sup> Chemistry Professor Robert N. Wilson to Few, May 5, 1931; June 27, 1931, WPF.

<sup>34</sup> Wilhelmina Isenhour, secretary to Appointments Office, Duke University, to Franklin J. Keller, director, National Occupation Conference, N.Y., to answer Keller to Few, March 22, 1935, WPF.



- <sup>35</sup> Seeman, "Books as 'Vigoro' for Genius," Publishers' Weekly 118, no. 17 (October 25, 1930): 1985-86.
- <sup>36</sup> Seeman, "What Does Your Boy Want to Be?" Psychology, 15, no. 6 (December 1930), 40-42, 62, ES.
- <sup>37</sup> Seeman, "Young Men in Earnest," The Modern Psychologist (September 1933): 164-67, Seeman Collection, Box 15.
- <sup>38</sup> Seeman, "Development of the Pictorial Aptitude in Children," Character and Personality 2, no. 3 (March 1934): 209-21.
- <sup>39</sup> Seeman, "The Fetishes We Worship," The Forum and Century 92 (July-December 1934): 306-08.

#### IV. Mutual Discontent

- <sup>1</sup> Seeman to Few, September 16, 1930, WPF.
- <sup>2</sup> Seeman to Davison, June 12, 1931, Papers of Wilburt C. Davison, Miscellaneous Correspondence, Medical School Archives, Duke University.
- <sup>3</sup> Davison to Seeman, June 18, 1931, Papers of Wilburt C. Davison, Miscellaneous Correspondence, Medical School Archives, Duke University.
- <sup>4</sup> Article in Duke University Alumni Register 18, no. 8 (August 1932): 225-27.
- <sup>5</sup> Few to McDougall, August 30, 1934, WPF.
- <sup>6</sup> Few to W. R. Perkins, close associate of James B. Duke, his chief legal counselor, and original trustee of the Duke Endowment, January 3, 1930, WPF.





<sup>7</sup> Perkins to Few, January 15, 1930, WPF.

<sup>8</sup> Thomas E. Powell, Jr., "An Ecological Study of the Tobacco Beetle, Lasioderma serricorne, Fabr, With Special Reference to Its Life History and Control," Ecological Monographs 1, no. 3 (July 1931): 333-93; 2, no. 3 (July 1932): 384.

<sup>9</sup> Perkins to Few, March 11, 1932, WPF.

<sup>10</sup> Few to Perkins, March 15, 1932, WPF.

<sup>11</sup> Perkins to Few, March 17, 1932, WPF.

<sup>12</sup> Pearse to Seeman, March 17, 1932, WPF.

<sup>13</sup> "Research Department, Duke University, Year 1933," November 28, 1932, RLF.

<sup>14</sup> W. W. Flowers to Gross, December 6, 1932, RLF.

<sup>15</sup> Gross to R. L. Flowers, December 8, 1932, RLF.

<sup>16</sup> Ernest Seeman, "Duke: But Not Doris," New Republic 88, no. 1139, (September 30, 1936): 220-22.

<sup>17</sup> Thomas was not the first guest whose campus visit caused controversy. In late 1925, Paul Blanchard, field secretary of the League for Industrial Democracy, had spoken to an economics class taught by Calvin Hoover. A newspaper reported it, and in answer to W. R. Odell's letter of criticism, Few advocated allowing students "to listen to the view of an able man who differs with you," a view supported by both Hoover and W. H. Glasson of the Economics Department. Few to W. R. Odell, Concord, N.C., December 17, 1925, WPF.

<sup>18</sup> Perkins to Few, December 15, 1930, WPF.



- 19 "They Honor Norman Thomas," Southern Textile Bulletin, December 11, 1930, WPF.
- 20 Few to Perkins, December 19, 1930, WPF.
- 21 Perkins to Few, January 7, 1931, WPF.
- 22 Few to Perkins, January 12, 1931, WPF.
- 23 Perkins to Few, January 15, 1931, WPF.
- 24 Few to Perkins, January 19, 1931, WPF.
- 25 Allen to Few, October 16, 1932, WPF.
- 26 Allen to Few, March 8, 1933, WPF.
- 27 Few to Allen, March 9, 1933, WPF.
- 28 Allen to Few, April 27, 1933, WPF.
- 29 Gossips attributed the Vandyke style of Few's beard to an effort to look like Ben Duke. His absent-minded habit of stroking the beard led to a story circulated among students that he was stroking his pet cootie held on a gold chain.
- 30 Few to W. R. Rankin, Charlotte, original trustee of the endowment, September 16, 1927, WPF.
- 31 Few to Perkins, January 13, 1930, WPF.
- 32 Davison's report to Few on the need of a Department of Psychiatry for the medical school, May 27, 1933, WPF.
- 33 Allen to Few, April 27, 1933, WPF.
- 34 Few to A. M. Palmer, Association of American Colleges, January 2, 1933, WPF. In Flowers to Bruton, July 10, 1933, Flowers suggested a 10% cut in all salaries and wages, which would allow a budget that would not seriously affect the activities of the university, RLF.



<sup>35</sup> Elizabeth Owen, Townsville, N.C., to Few, December 21, 1931, WPF.

<sup>36</sup> Few to Lynne Few, second son, in school in Switzerland, January 27, 1931, WPF. Few made a rare comment of importance when he wrote of Wallace Wade's coming to Duke to coach football: "I almost rank his coming here among 3 in our greatest accessions, the first being Dr. William McDougall, perhaps the most distinguished psychologist in the world, and the other, Mr. H. R. Dwire, in the Alumni Office."

<sup>37</sup> Few to Perkins, May 6, 1932, WPF.

<sup>38</sup> Few to J. E. McLean, county superintendent of education, Reidsville, N.C. May 11, 1931, WPF.

<sup>39</sup> Seeman to Few, May 8, 1931, WPF.

<sup>40</sup> Ernest Seeman, "Black Vision," The Commonweal 16, no. 2 (May 11, 1932): 37-39.

<sup>41</sup> Few to Major Robert R. Moton, Principal, Tuskegee Institute; Few to President Jones, Fisk University; Few to Dr. J. H. Dillard, Charlottesville, Va.; Few to Dr. Arthur D. Wright, Washington, D.C., all May 20, 1932, WPF.

<sup>42</sup> Flowers to Rippy, August 24, 1932, RLF.

<sup>43</sup> Seeman to Garland Greever, 565 N. Lucerne Blvd., Los Angeles, California, February 18, 1933, RLF.

<sup>44</sup> Seeman to Pearse, December 19, 1933, Papers of Arthur Sperry Pearse, University Archives, Duke University.

<sup>45</sup> Seeman to Flowers, December 10, 1931, RLF. A realistic evaluation of the Press's activities from 1931 to 1934 may be





made from a letter to Flowers from R. A. Rivera (December 17, 1934, RFL), who succeeded Seeman as executive secretary of the press. He reported that for the past three years no effective advertising had been carried on and that there were no lists of files of names whatsoever of prospective customers. The report may reflect the economy of the times as much as Seeman's management procedures.

<sup>46</sup> Flowers to Rippy, August 24, 1943, RLF.

<sup>47</sup> Seeman to Dwire, September 19, 1933, RLF.

<sup>48</sup> Seeman, "Duke: But Not Doris," New Republic 88, no. 1139 (September 30, 1936): 220-22.

<sup>49</sup> Recollections, 37.

<sup>50</sup> Recollections, 40.

<sup>51</sup> Seeman to Dwire, September 19, 1933, RLF.

<sup>52</sup> Few to Sands, March 15, 1933, WPF.

## V. The Iconoclast

<sup>1</sup> Seeman to Dwire, September 19, 1933, RLF.

<sup>2</sup> Miller to Perkins, November 9, 1933, WPF.

<sup>3</sup> [Janet Earl Miller], "The Vision of King Paucus," October 1933.

<sup>4</sup> M. A. Briggs, Durham businessman, to Few, May 1, 1930, inquiring about the prevalence of Duke professors who taught communist doctrines; Few to Allen, August 5, 1933, discussing correspondence with H. W. Tyler, general secretary of the American Association of Universities and "'correspondents' who



will continue to muddy the water for us in the effort to prevent our admission in the AAU, the one organization in the country to which we need admission and have not received it," WPF.

<sup>5</sup> Ben Dixon MacNeill, "Duke," American Mercury 17, no. 65 (August 1929): 430-38.

<sup>6</sup> Nolan B. Harmon, Jr., editor of The Baltimore Southern Methodist (organ of the Baltimore Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South) to Few, June 26, 1929, re H. L. Mencken's article in the Baltimore Evening Sun accusing James B. Duke of gambling and drinking, WPF; W. J. Cash, "Buck Duke's University," American Mercury 30, no. 17 (September 1933): 102.

<sup>7</sup> Jonathan Daniels, "Anti-Social Philanthropy," New Republic 79, no. 1027 (August 8, 1934): 335-37.

<sup>8</sup> Few to Wallace Wade, Duke football coach, October 22, 1931, WPF.

<sup>9</sup> Anonymous to Wannamaker, March 17, 1932. McDougall, Pearse and Lundholm, all friends and editorial associates of Seeman were among the sixteen professors named who allegedly sought no favors and desired to avoid all "peanut politics," preferring to be known only as scholars and teachers, RLF.

<sup>10</sup> Recollections, 42. These statements could be interpreted as Few's promising to restore Seeman to his former position if he acquiesced.

<sup>11</sup> Seeman, American Gold.

<sup>12</sup> Janet Earl, letter to the the author, October 9, 1979.



<sup>13</sup> Earl to the author, April 23, 1979. In a later interview she revealed that Seeman's editing included the addition of Henry Dwire, the eunuch, a significant character in the satire.

<sup>14</sup> Interview with Earl, Essex, Connecticut, October 8, 1979.

<sup>15</sup> Seeman to Earl, November 25, 1968; March 12, 1969.

<sup>16</sup> Recollections, 38, 39.

<sup>17</sup> Seeman to Flowers, February 13, 1934. RLF.

<sup>18</sup> Recollections, 42.

<sup>19</sup> "Faculty Members Accept Posts on Grievance Board," Durham Morning Herald, February 10, 1934, Student Rebellion Collection, University Archives, Duke University.

<sup>20</sup> Richard Austin Smith, '35, "You've Come a Long Way, Baby! A Personal Memoir of One Year in the Tumultuous Thirties," February, 1934, The Archive file, University Archives, Duke University; telephone interview with Smith, Noank, Connecticut, March 11, 1987. Smith knew Seeman casually at Duke. When Seeman, en route to New York in the summer of 1935, visited Smith in Washington where he was working with the Labor Department, Smith was surprised to see Seeman distraught at his dismissal from Duke. Smith had felt no such reaction, a reasonable condition for both when one considers that Seeman at nearly 50 years old was losing a wife, son and job, with little prospect for another, and the single 22-year-old Smith had his life before him.

<sup>21</sup> Smith, "For Better, For Worse," The Archive, 46, no. 8 (May 1934): 37.





22 "Overlooked" were Jack Dunlap, football captain elect, 1934; John Hamrick, member of the pan-hellenic council; L. H. Edmondson, 1934 editor of The Chronicle, student newspaper, recently honored by the National College Press Association as editing the "best college weekly in the United States." State Progress (paper published by the labor union at Durham but it appears to be the organ for the state labor organization), May 13, 1934, Student Rebellion Collection, University Archives, Duke University.

23 "Revolt at Duke," Time, 23, no. 8 (February 19, 1934): 36, 38.

24 "Duke-Trinity Struggle is Suspected on Local Campus," Durham Sun, February 17, 1934.

25 Telegram from 35 students to Alex Sands, February 7, 1934, RLF.

26 Flowers to Sands, February 10, 1934, RLF.

27 Flowers to Bruton, February 16, 1934, RLF.

28 Few to Bruton, February 21, 1934, WPF.

29 "Students Declare Administration is Bringing Pressure," Durham Morning Herald, February 13, 1934.

30 Seeman to Flowers, February 13, 1934, RLF.

31 Few to President Henry N. Snyder, Wofford College, Spartanburg, S.C., February 20, 1934, WPF.

32 There is no evidence of any connection of Anthony Buttitta with Duke University. For a year or so beginning in 1933 he operated a book store in Durham. A recent letter from



Buttitta, New York City, furnished no information about Few's accusations. Buttitta wrote: "Wish I could help you regarding memory of Seeman, etc. but I must say that after more than 50 years I cannot dig up a memory of any kind connected with that name." Reading the Durham Morning Herald, the Durham Sun and the Raleigh News and Observer with particular attention to letters to the editor, from November 1933 to February 1934, has produced no evidence of a newspaper war.

<sup>33</sup> Snyder to Few, February 23, 1934, WPF.

<sup>34</sup> Few to Stanbury, February 21, 1934, WPF.

<sup>35</sup> Twenty-seven faculty members to Few, February 22, 1934, WPF.

<sup>36</sup> White to Few, February 25, 1934, WPF.

<sup>37</sup> Seeman to Wannamaker, February 16, 1934. "These God-made symbols of freshness and purification of life and purpose" suggest that flowers may have accompanied the note. Office of the Dean, Papers of William H. Wannamaker, University Archives, Duke University.

<sup>38</sup> Seeman to Flowers, February 13, 1934, RLF.

<sup>39</sup> Seeman to Few, February 24, 1934, WPF.

<sup>40</sup> Memorandum from the Management Committee of the Committee on the Duke University Press, July 24, 1934, from minutes of the board of managers, Duke University Press, office of Duke University Press, 6697 College Station, Durham N.C., 27708.

<sup>41</sup> Seeman to Graham, August 8, 1934. There is no evidence that Graham answered the letter but "application" hand-written in



the margin of the letter may have indicated that it was answered in the application office.

<sup>42</sup> Seeman to Mr. and Mrs. Ernest J. Green, Columbia, S.C., August 28, 1934, WPF.

<sup>43</sup> Letterhead, Seeman Collection, Box 9.

<sup>44</sup> Seeman to Dean Alice Baldwin, ES.

<sup>45</sup> Seeman to Few, October 15, 1934, ES.

<sup>46</sup> Recollections, 37.

<sup>47</sup> Willard M. Marley, Durham, telephone interview, March 28, 1987.

<sup>48</sup> Earl to author, December 19, 1986.

Epilogue. In the Arms of the Mountain

<sup>1</sup> Elizabeth Seeman, In the Arms of the Mountain--An Intimate Journal of the Great Smokies, illustrated by Glen H. Rounds (New York: Crown Publishers, 1961).

<sup>2</sup> Elizabeth Seeman, interview with Mimi Conway, recorded at Tumblin' Creek, Erwin, Tennessee, February 19, 1976, 4007 (G55), 41. Southern Oral History Collection, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, N. C.

<sup>3</sup> "News from the Dial Press," a divison of Dell Publishing Company, April 4, 1978.

<sup>4</sup> Seeman to Graham, September 12, 1938, Papers of Frank Porter Graham, 1819, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.





<sup>5</sup> Recollections, 46. A map drawn by explorers Al Brown and Exie Duncan directed students who visited Seeman there during the winter of 1934-35, Seeman Collection, Box 15.

<sup>6</sup> Recollections, 47. The visitor, Godfrey Klinger, was the brother of Elizabeth Brickel Klinger's first husband.

<sup>7</sup> Seeman to Albright, December 24, 1960.

<sup>8</sup> Elizabeth Seeman, The Talking Dog and the Barking Man (New York: Franklin Watts Publishing House, n.d.).

<sup>9</sup> Jay M. Steinberg, "Up Tumblin' Creek," The Tennessee Conservationist, 36, no. 8 (August 1970): 8.

<sup>10</sup> Ernest Seeman, "Duke: But Not Doris," New Republic 88, no. 1139 (September 30, 1936): 220-22.

<sup>11</sup> David F. Cavers, Lon L. Fuller, Douglas B. Maggs, "A Communication: The Duke University Law School in Rebuttal," New Republic, 88, no. 1142 (October 21, 1936): 311.

<sup>12</sup> Ernest Seeman, "Mr. Seeman in Reply," New Republic 89, no. 1145 (November 11, 1936): 148.

<sup>13</sup> Interviews in Durham on February 28, 1987, with Emerson Ford, Inter-Library Loan Department, Duke Library, 1948-1985, and J. P. Waggoner, Jr., head of Circulation Department, Duke Library, 1947-1975, indicate that Benjamin Powell, University Librarian, gave instructions that Seeman was to use any facilities of the library he chose, contrary to the usual policy for inter-library loans. Ford remembers one visit Seeman made to the library in the 1960s, arriving on the intercity bus.



<sup>14</sup> Seeman to Hornell Hart, Department of Sociology, Duke University, April 2, 1956; Seeman to J. H. Shrader, Waterville, VT, February 14, 1957, ES; Seeman to Edward Foster, Department of English, Georgia Institute of Technology, Atlanta, September 11, 1959, ES.

<sup>15</sup> Seeman to editor, Agricultural Review, Raleigh, December 14, 1956; Pathologist Wiley D. Forbus, Duke University School of Medicine, to Seeman, September 5, 1957, ES.

<sup>16</sup> Edward Foster to Seeman, August 29, 1959; Seeman to Foster, September 11, 1959, ES.

<sup>17</sup> Dean Robert E. Cushman, Divinity School, Duke University, to Elizabeth Seeman, January 7, 1960; Howard (no last name), Coe College, Cedar Rapids, IA, to Seeman, March 16, 1960; Dean of Men Theodore W. Zillman, University of Wisconsin, Madison, to Seeman, January 7, 1960, ES.

<sup>18</sup> Senator Estes Kefauver to Seeman, August 5, 1957 and November 25, 1957; Seeman to Kefauver, November 26, 1957, ES.

<sup>19</sup> Anthropologist Weston LaBarre, Duke University, to Seeman, June 17, 1959, ES.

<sup>20</sup> Honolulu Record, Publishing Company Limited, 811 Sheridan St., Honolulu, to Seeman, May 4, 1957, ES.

<sup>21</sup> Elizabeth Seeman to E. McD. Miller, Durham and New York, friend of Ernest Seeman since the 1920s, October, 1979.

<sup>22</sup> Seeman, American Gold.



<sup>23</sup> Barbara Bannon, "About Ernest Seeman," "News from the Dial Press," a division of Dell Publishing Company, April 14, 1978.

<sup>24</sup> Mark Pinsky, "'American Gold': 40-Year Old Novel," Raleigh News and Observer, April 9, 1978, 6-IV.

<sup>25</sup> Jonathan Yardley, "A 'Rediscovered' Novel About Durham, N.C.," The Washington Post, April 17, 1978, B4.

<sup>26</sup> Robert Dahlin, "Success at 91: Author's Lifework Gathers Dust for 30 Years," Chicago Tribune, April 29, 1978, "The Saturday Column."





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